

— LATIN AMERICA @ WAR No.20 —

THE CHACO WAR 1932-1935

FIGHTING IN THE GREEN HELL



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FOREWORD

I am particularly pleased to present this valuable work that synthesises the most important and probably the bloodiest South American war of the 20th century, between two neighbouring countries, Paraguay and Bolivia. The conflict, which was carried out between 1932 and 1935, was a territorial dispute involving about 320,000km² of the region known as the Chaco. Internationally known as the Chaco War, it was also called the War of Thirst as military strategies prioritised the control of the scarce water lagoons for the survival of troops. Three years of confrontation involved the mobilisation of 375,000 men, almost a fifth of whom would lose their lives in combat or due to dehydration and dysentery.

Having exhausted all the diplomatic channels in almost 80 years of negotiations for a border agreement, the two countries, both with modest economies, ended up facing each other on the battlefield. Bolivia was better positioned in terms of reserves with its mining exports, whereas Paraguay's financial situation was still recovering from the setbacks suffered during its last armed confrontation, the Triple Alliance War (1864–70), against a coalition of Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, which had left the country in poverty and with a decimated population.

That did not prevent both governments from getting into debt, leaving their inhabitants in complete austerity whilst buying the most modern equipment and armaments of the time, anticipating the military techniques of the Second World War.

Battles were waged by armies of both sides against an implacable enemy called by many 'The Green Hell': an arid terrain, inhospitable

and unknown, with dusty and impassable roads, dangerous vegetation, acute shortage of water and impenetrable forests full of insects and venomous serpents. The heat in the region was oppressive; temperatures could reach almost 50° Celsius (122° Fahrenheit) in summer but tumbled as low as -5° Celsius (23° Fahrenheit) in winter.

The Chaco Ground War is written by two esteemed and distinguished friends, passionate about the history of this unique military struggle – José Luis Martínez Peláez and Antonio Luis Sapienza Fracchia, both born in Asunción in Paraguay. They have honoured me with the task of prefacing this book, which not only has an orderly chronology of the development of the conflict, from its antecedents to the cessation of hostilities, but also detailed charts of the units in combat, with their military chiefs, and the armaments and equipments used by both countries. Their writing is based on years of research and collection of documents.

It is extremely difficult to synthesise a war of which numerous volumes have been written in a condensed book. It not only means a great effort of data selection and compilation, but a vast knowledge of the events and a deep admiration of the facts and the men who led this war.

In this excellent work, José and Antonio expertly revive the cruel episodes of this bitter dispute, offering the reader an interesting chronicle of the epic story of the Chaco War.

Arch. Victor Meden
Asunción, November 2019

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Chaco War in 1935, a large number of volumes on that conflict have been published in both Bolivia and Paraguay. The first books were written by veterans of the war, by the commanders in chief, the commanders of army corps, regiments or battalions, by officers or non-commissioned officers, in the form of personal memoirs or global stories, using diverse documentary sources. This conflict also attracted foreign writers, mainly from the United States and Europe, who researched with great interest and then published volumes in various languages that were added to the already extensive literature on the Chaco War. Hundreds of articles have also been published in various newspapers, magazines and online web pages.

Why, then, publish another book on a topic that has been written upon such a lot? With my co-author, and at the request of Helion, we saw the need to put together a concise history of this conflict, so that the reader could have a general knowledge of the operations carried out during the Chaco War and the prior preparations of both armies: the slow Bolivian penetration into the territory from the early 20th century to occupy almost half of the Chaco, and the subsequent battles, with the numbers of troops mobilised for each confrontation, their commanders, casualties and captured armaments. All this is here illustrated with a series of photographs, most of them previously unpublished, from the Archives of the Institute of History and the Military Museum of the Ministry of National Defense of Paraguay, several Paraguayan and Bolivian private archives, and the always excellent maps prepared by professional cartographers of the Helion

team, not to mention the colourful profiles that illustrate the central section of the book.

In these pages, the reader is provided with a concise history of this war, without having to resort to expensive volumes of 500 or 1,000 pages, with a myriad of details that make one lose the thread of the conflict. This volume is perfectly complemented by a previous work of mine in the 'Latin America @War' series, *The Chaco Air War*, where the air and naval operations of the conflict were described.

We hope that this volume will be appreciated by the faithful followers of this series and will provide them with a general knowledge of what was perhaps the first modern conflict in the Americas, where the latest generation of weapons were used, such as mortars, flamethrowers, tanks and tankettes, light and heavy machineguns, grenades, and cannons and howitzers of various calibres. Two different styles of warfare were practiced on the battlefields of this conflict. While the Bolivian commanders – first General Kundt and then General Peñaranda – initially preferred frontal attacks that cost numerous lives, the Paraguayan commanders, led by General José Félix Estigarribia, favoured flank attacks to carry out manoeuvres of envelopment, so as to liquidate the enemy on the battlefield.

The results were clear, with the Bolivian Army expelled from the Chaco in three years of bloody fighting. Around 100,000 casualties resulted from this conflict, which many authors have defined as a 'war for oil', which is, however, a false label. Bolivia fought for a sovereign exit to the sea through the Paraguay River, and needed to occupy the

entire Chaco; Paraguay, for its part, fought to maintain the sovereignty of a territory that it always considered its own, since being a Spanish colony.

Antonio Luis Sapienza
Asunción, October 2018

1

BACKGROUND – MILITARY PREPARATIONS – THE WAR BREAKS OUT

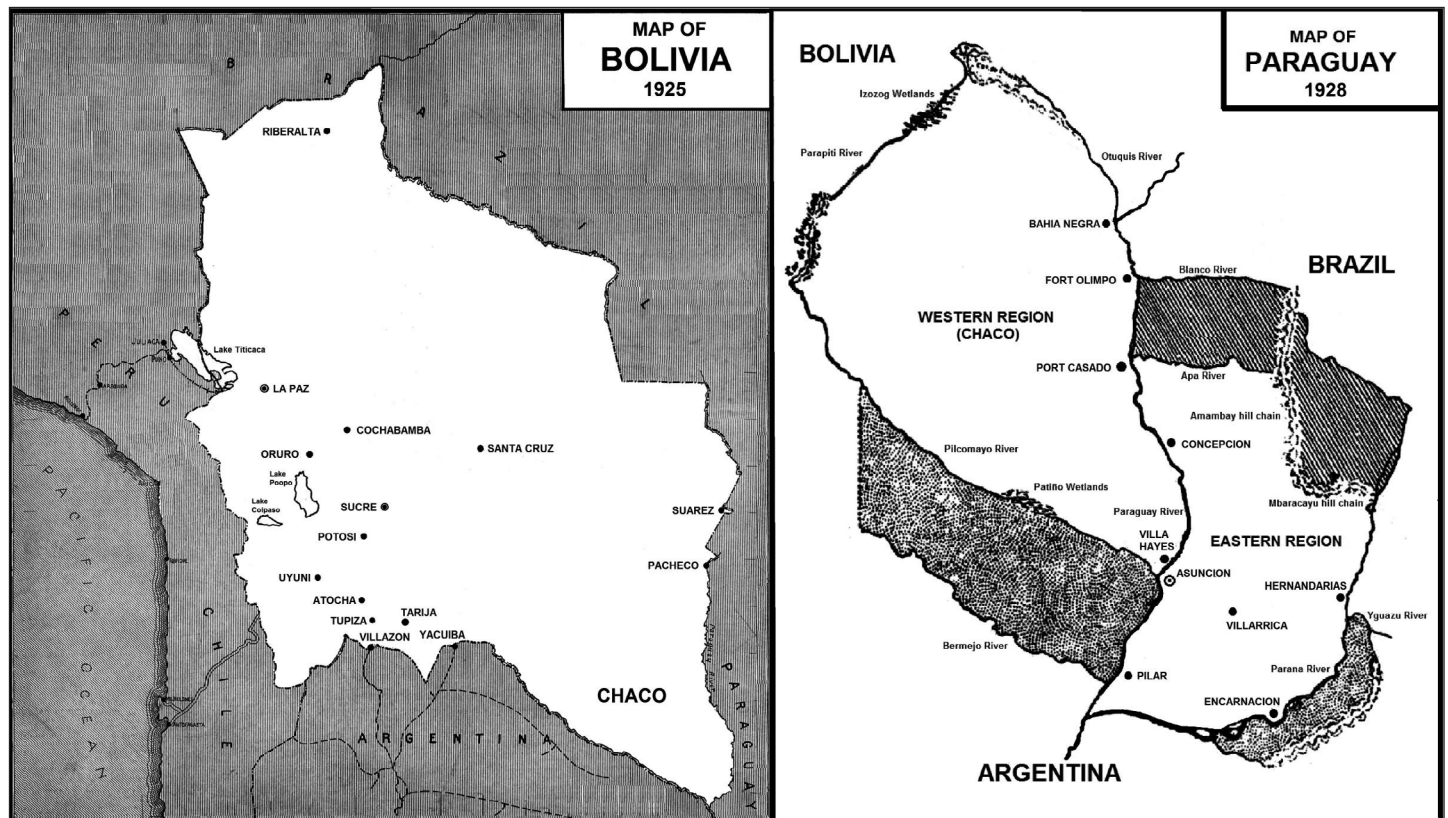
Background

The end of the colonial period in the southern region of South America, which began in 1809 with internal revolts in Upper Peru (later Bolivia), led to a situation that up until then was unimportant in the vast territory of the Spanish Crown in that continent. Besides the borders with the Kingdom of Portugal, there were no clear, convenient and physically delimited borders among the provinces administered by the new governors and General Captains, as they were called at that time. This was not a major difficulty until the newly emerging countries with their emancipatory movements needed to define them.

The modern independent states of Bolivia and Paraguay had a lengthy litigation over the Northern Chaco before the beginning of this war, because although that territory was assigned to a Spanish colonial political entity, the different interpretations of the titles, documents and legal provisions of the crown made it difficult to reach a peaceful agreement on the matter. Bolivia raised the problem as a territorial issue (litigation over the whole of the Northern Chaco), while Paraguay understood that it was a question of borders and therefore only needed to establish where they were. This territory is



Years before the war, both countries claimed the Chaco as their own territory, especially on maps and even on postage stamps. The Paraguayan stamp has the phrase 'The Chaco Boreal has been, is and will be Paraguayan'. The Bolivian one shows the 'Bolivian Chaco'. (Author's files)



Left, the map of Bolivia shows the entire Chaco as part of its territory. Right, the map of Paraguay also shows the entire Chaco, up to the Parapiti River to the northwest, as its territory. The dark areas in the map of Paraguay depict the territory lost in the Triple Alliance War (1864–70). (Author's files)

located between the 25° parallel (limited to the south by the Pilcomayo River) and the 19° parallel (limited to the north by the Negro River/Otuquis and the San José mountain range), limited to the east – between the meridians 57° and 58° – by the Paraguay River, and to the west – between the 62° and 63° meridians – by the Andean foothills (Cordillera del Aguaraú) and the Parapití River.

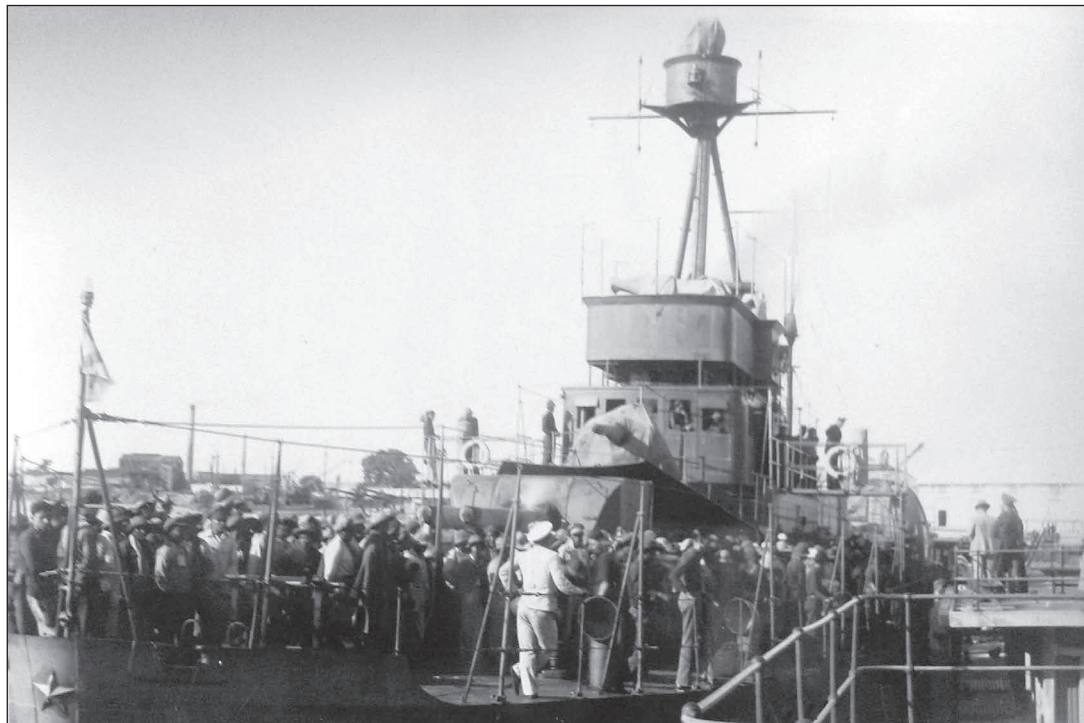
Although Bolivia claimed all of the Chaco territory, its first formal claim was only over a place in the Northern Chaco through the protest

note of its minister (ambassador) in Buenos Aires, Juan Benavente, in 1852, claiming a strip of Bolivian property between the 20th and 22nd parallels. In 1879, 1887 and 1894, both countries signed treaties where different borders were conventionally established. All these treaties, however, lacked congressional ratification. It is noteworthy that the entire right bank (west) of the Paraguay River had been occupied, inhabited, evangelised and exploited by the Province of Paraguay from the first days of the Spanish conquest in 1534, and later by the

Republic of Paraguay since 1811. It was Bolivia which raised the different treaties, since Paraguay – in addition to having suffered almost the extinction of its population against Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay during the Triple Alliance War of 1864–70 – had little interest in establishing definitive borders in the west with its neighbour, having still not overcome the trauma of the previous war.

Throughout the 19th century, Bolivia proposed a solution to the problem of the lack of borders with Paraguay in a peaceful and consensual manner, given that it too had endured a conflict, the Pacific War of 1879–83, losing about 400km of coastline on the Pacific Ocean. As a consequence, its exit to the Atlantic Ocean through the Paraguay River was deemed vital. In the negotiations of these treaties, the colonial titles that could have granted the Chaco territory to one or the other country were not taken into account, since if they had been submitted to international arbitration, only one country would have owned the region. Since each of them held a thesis of ownership adjudication diametrically opposed to the other, and although some discussions about it existed, they did not have a major influence on the border lines proposed on each occasion.

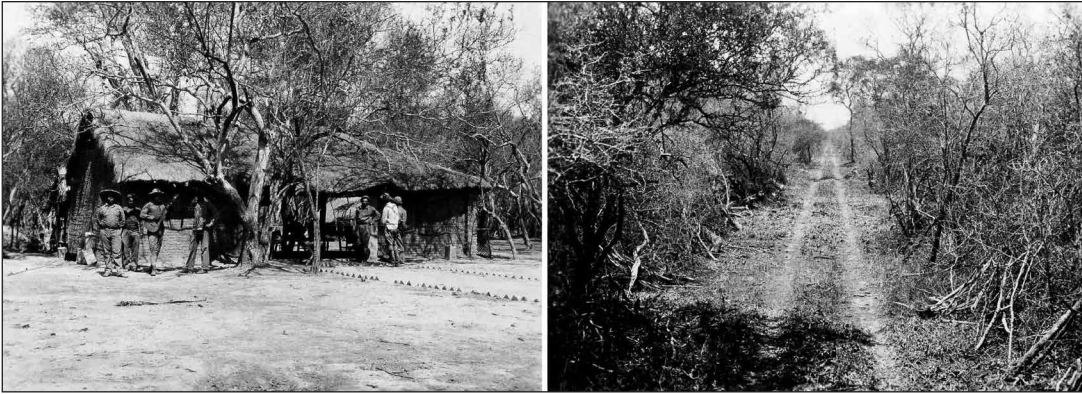
The 20th century began with a last peaceful attempt to adjust the borders when in 1907, the Pinilla-Soler Protocol was signed, whereby each country was awarded a sector of the Chaco and a central section was destined for international arbitration by the Argentine president, José Figueroa Alcorta. However, Alcorta declined his intervention as a result of the



Paraguayan Navy gunboat *Paraguay* transporting troops to the battlefield. Two new gunboats secured Paraguayan supremacy along the Paraguay River. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



Bolivian Army water-cooled Vickers Mk.I class C heavy machineguns, ZB vz. 30 machineguns mounted on both tripod and bipod, and Steyr-Solothurn S1-100 submachineguns. (Bolivian Army Archives)



Left, the Paraguayan Army's Fort Carlos Antonio López, near the Pitiantuta lagoon, where the war began. Right, the road to Fort Carlos Antonio López. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)

inconveniences that arose from having previously favoured Peru in a border dispute with Bolivia. Bolivia understood that its negotiator, Pinilla, had made a terrible deal for his country, and demanded the annulment of the protocol, to which Paraguay agreed. Both countries thereafter reached a commitment not to advance their positions in the Chaco.

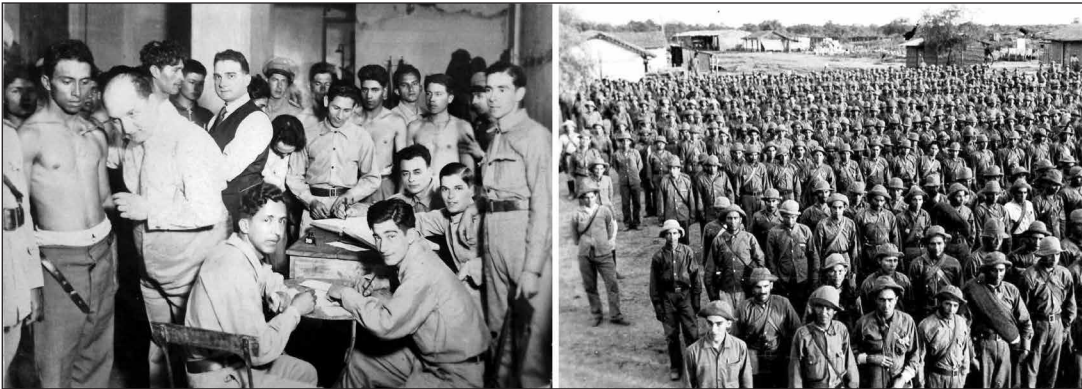
This commitment, called the 1907 *Status Quo*, was renewed four times by protocols until 1918, when it was renewed *sine die* until a solution to the border problem could be found. Bolivia, however, began a slow occupation of the Chaco towards the Paraguay River in 1913, establishing forts and military settlements within that central section that was subject to arbitration. Later, in 1924, it also did so in the area which the 1907 protocol had assigned to Paraguay and which, in addition, had already been adjudicated to that country by the 1878 arbitration of American President Rutherford B. Hayes. That zone was bordered by the Pilcomayo, Paraguay and Verde rivers. Also

the Paraguay River since its hinterland was occupied by 30 Paraguayan military forts. In Washington DC, both countries made attempts to sign a non-aggression pact as the distance between their forts in the Chaco often did not exceed 10km and clashes between army patrols were frequent, in some instances with several deaths, as was the case in the conquest, destruction and abandonment of the Bolivian fortress of Vanguardia in 1928 by Paraguayan troops. Disagreements between the two countries meant the Washington pact was never signed although negotiations continued.

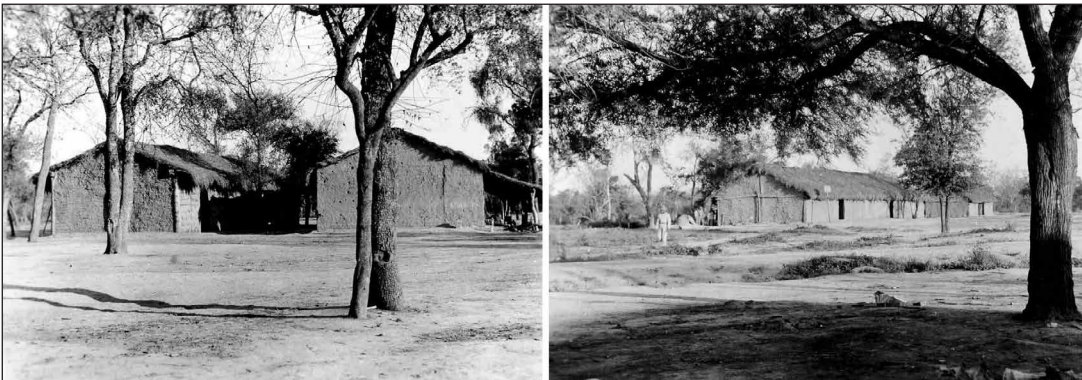
Military Preparations

The Bolivian military occupation of the Chaco was done with very limited means in terms of arms and soldiers. However, Paraguay was emerging from the bloody and exhausting civil war of 1922–23 that left its army with only 130 officers and 2,381 soldiers. In 1924,

the newly elected president, Dr Eligio Ayala, requested that the Paraguayan military leadership prepare plans for the defence of the Chaco against the Bolivian occupation of the Hayes area. Three plans were presented, and that of General Manlio Schenoni, the highest ranking military officer, was chosen. This consisted of the creation of an army of 23,000 men, organised into four army divisions, with 21,453 rifles, 832 automatic weapons, 128 guns and 14 combat aircraft. The total cost of this armament was around \$7 million. Yet the Paraguayan war budget was very limited, with only \$½ million budgeted for the armed forces in 1924. The purchase of armaments in Europe started with \$2 million dollars under the premise of providing the Paraguayan Army with only 25 percent of Schenoni's original plan. Dr Ayala also arranged the construction of two gunboats in Italy for the protection of the



Mobilisation of Paraguayan soldiers at the beginning of the Chaco War. Left, medical inspection of draftees in Asunción. Right, this photograph was taken at Kilometer 145 of the Casado Railroad, in the heart of the Chaco, where each soldier received his Mauser rifle. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



Construction works in Fort Boquerón, where the first great battle of the war took place between 9 and 29 September 1932 and which ended with Paraguayan victory. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)

Paraguay River, along with mobile artillery bases with eight 120mm guns. Then in 1928, President José P. Guggiari ordered the purchase of Stokes-Brandt mortars.

Rumours of the purchase of arms by Paraguay forced Bolivia to initiate contacts with armament factories in 1926, on the initiative of President Hernando Siles. The British company Vickers Ltd offered a full arsenal for an army of 80,000 effectives for £3 million (\$15 million), but given the state of the Bolivian economy that year, the offer was reduced to £1.87 million and in January 1929 the final contract was signed for £1.25 million, substantially altering the agreed list of weapons, which began to arrive in Bolivia in 1931. This contract was to equip an army of 30,000 men. About 24,000 vz. 24 rifles arrived in Bolivia by the beginning of the war, in place of the originally agreed Lee-Enfield weapons. In addition, the order included 250 Vickers heavy machineguns and 500 Vickers-Berthier light machineguns, of which only 50 percent arrived on time.

The War Breaks Out

Even though negotiations to reach a Non-Aggression Pact were still being carried out in Washington, on 15 June 1932 – due to misunderstandings between the Bolivian Army General Staff and President Daniel Salamanca regarding his orders – Bolivian troops launched a surprise attack on the Paraguayan Fort Carlos A. López on

the Pitiantuta lagoon in the heart of the Chaco. This lagoon, about 5km long, ensured an abundant fresh water supply for the Bolivian Army on its way to the Paraguay River. One month later, the Paraguayan Army regained the fort, using for the first time the French 81mm Stokes-Brandt mortars that had been acquired a few years earlier.

Given these misunderstandings, President Salamanca falsified the reality and publicly presented the case as a Paraguayan attack on the Bolivian fort. In retaliation, he ordered the immediate and violent capture of three Paraguayan forts, those at Boquerón, Toledo and Corrales, in late July. On 2 August, Paraguay ordered a general mobilisation and gathered 12,000 recruits in less than 50 days, who, along with approximately 3,000 men of the regular army, would face some 3,000 poorly armed Bolivians in the Chaco. Bolivia not only decreed a partial mobilisation, but also studied other alternatives for the coming war. In the beginning, Bolivia resisted the return of the three Paraguayan forts, as the international community and Paraguay had demanded, a decision it would eventually pay dearly for.

On 8 September 1932, the Paraguayan Army moved the first 5,800 men of its I Army Corps (ICE), including all the 1st Division and part of the 2nd Division, to Fort Boquerón to assault it the next day in what is considered by the traditional bibliography of both countries as the beginning of the Chaco War.

2

1932 – FIRST PARAGUAYAN OFFENSIVE – THE BATTLE OF BOQUERÓN – BOLIVIAN RETREAT

The Battle of Boquerón

On 9 September 1932, the commander of the Paraguayan forces in the Chaco, Lieutenant Colonel José Félix Estigarribia, arranged an initial attack against Fort Boquerón with three infantry regiments and a cavalry regiment, later adding another regiment of cavalry. These units had reached the fort by two roads, one from the north and another from the east. The Bolivians that had occupied the fort in July had turned it into a strong fortress, whereas the Paraguayan logistics were weak, which would weigh heavily against them in the course of the first days of combat. Fort Boquerón, with a perimeter of no more than 3,000 metres, was defended by 12 casemates with heavy machineguns, 27 with light machineguns and approximately 600 Bolivian troops under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Manuel Marzana. In other nearby Bolivian forts, there were some 2,500 troops who would later try to help their comrades in Boquerón. From the first moment, Lieutenant Colonel Estigarribia planned to cut all Bolivian communications to the fort, to do which he had

to completely isolate it and prevent attempts to provide assistance from outside. The Bolivians, on the other hand, aimed to hold on to Boquerón and thereby bring about a Paraguayan failure that would force them to accept the Bolivian conditions for an exit to the Paraguay River. The Bolivian government and General Staff did not believe reports of a massive Paraguayan mobilisation in the Chaco.

The Paraguayans, confident of a quick recovery of their fort, first launched a frontal assault from the east with the 4th Infantry

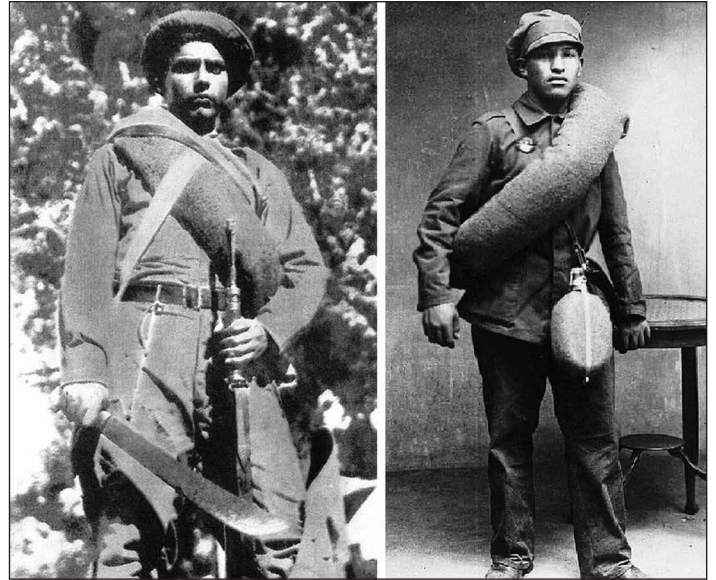


Left, Lieutenant Colonel Manuel Marzana, commander of the Bolivian troops in Fort Boquerón. Centre, Paraguayan Army Major Arturo Bray of the 6th Regiment. Right, Lieutenant Colonel Marzana as a POW at Fort Isla Po'i, reading a Paraguayan newspaper, after the Battle of Boquerón. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)

Regiment '*Curupayty*', without carrying out previous reconnaissance of the enemy forces. The attack was violently repulsed. At the same time, a second force, 2nd Infantry Regiment '*Ytororó*', was sent to cut the road that connected Boquerón with the Bolivian Fort Yujra, 9km to the south.

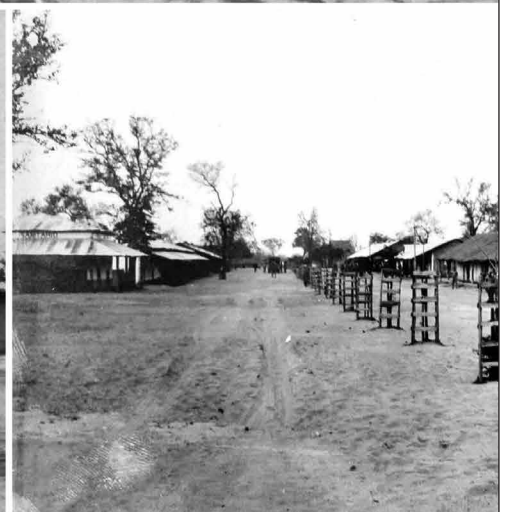
Some of the 2nd Regiment's battalions managed to cut the road under intense enemy fire from inside the fort, and then immediately ambushed the Bolivian *Lairana* Battalion which tried to help from outside the fortress; the latter lost about 100 men dead and wounded. Near Yujra, the Paraguayan 2nd Cavalry Regiment '*Coronel Toledo*' also cut the road. After a few hours, the Paraguayans abandoned the road and returned to their starting positions due to lack of water for the men and horses, leaving the Bolivians in Fort Boquerón to celebrate the Paraguayan retreat.

There were still problems with the supply of water for the Paraguayan combatants the next day, which prevented them from moving around the fort. The cavalry returned their horses to the base at Isla Po'i, and would fight the rest of the war on foot, never again mounting their steeds. After 72 hours, the battle restarted, the fortress being attacked from the east and north. Meanwhile, the Bolivians were able to receive reinforcements from the south with little inconvenience. Included among those reinforcements was one of the most famous officers of the Bolivian Army at that time, Captain Victor '*Charata*' Ustarez. Captain Ustarez had served in the Chaco region before the war and had an excellent knowledge of the area, and was considered



Left, a Paraguayan infantry soldier with full gear, wearing his olive green uniform, with a Mauser rifle and a large machete knife. Right, a Bolivian infantry soldier wearing a khaki uniform. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

a 'daredevil' among the Bolivian troops. However, when leaving on a patrol mission on 12 September, Ustarez was killed by a Paraguayan machinegun burst.



Top left: Fort Isla Po'i (a Guaraní name meaning 'Thin Island') and the Paraguayan Army Headquarters which was called the COMANCHACO. Top right: Lieutenant Colonel José Félix Estigarribia, second from the right, listens to a report given by Captain Pastore, Chief of Intelligence. Bottom left: The officers' mess. Bottom right: and Isla Po'i main street. (2nd Lieutenant Adolf Friedrich collection, Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)



Bolivian Army Captain Victor 'Charata' Ustarez, who was killed in action during the Battle of Boquerón. (Bolivian Army Archives)



Bolivian Army Colonel Enrique Peñaranda with Lieutenant Colonel Toro and other officers. (Bolivian Army Archives)

On 13 September, Bolivian troops commanded by Colonel Enrique Peñaranda began an approach from Yujra, to the south, to try to disrupt the road that had been reoccupied by the Paraguayan 3rd Regiment '*Corrales*'. For two days, Peñaranda tried unsuccessfully to surround the '*Corrales*', which was by now very well deployed across the road.

On 15 September, both armies relieved their units; the Paraguayans replacing those that had attacked the fort, including Lieutenant Colonel Estigarribia, who wanted to be closer to the troops in the front line. The Bolivians were also reorganised, and a new contingent of approximately 700 soldiers was formed in Forts Yujra and Castillo, known as *Detachment Méndez*, under the command of the legendary Colonel Walter '*El Tigre Rubio*' (the blond tiger) Méndez.

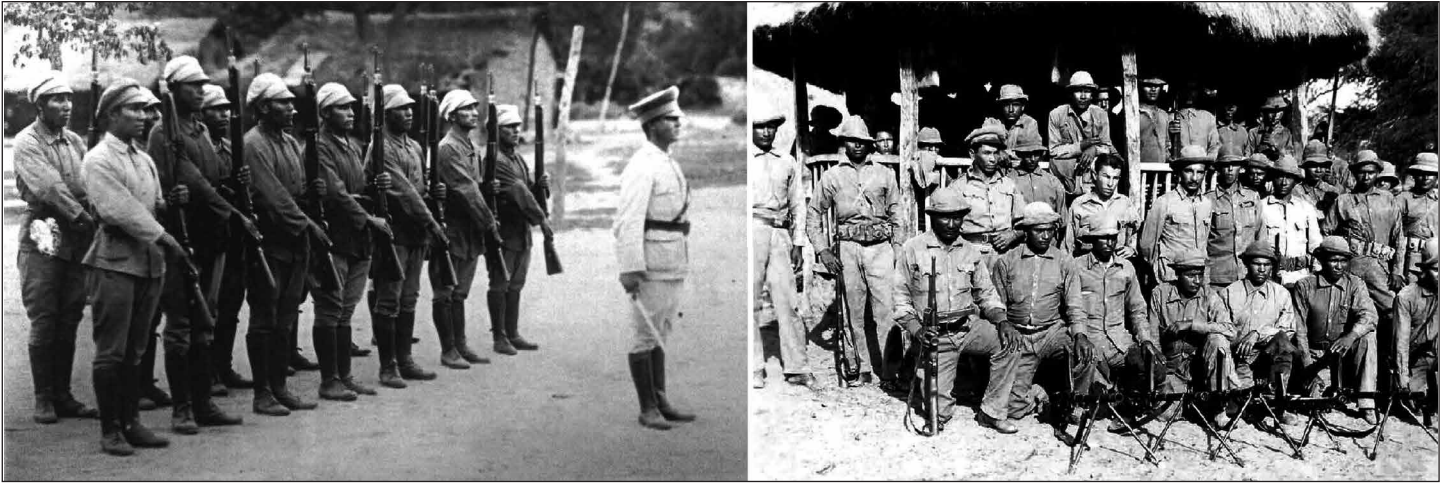


Lieutenant Carlos Pastore (centre), Postmaster and Intelligence Chief of the Paraguayan Army, with his assistants at their post in the COMANCHACO, Isla Po'i. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden)

The Bolivians deployed the 14th '*Florida*' Regiment under the command of Lieutenant Montalvo with 200 men, the 16th '*Beni*' Regiment under Lieutenant Colonel Aguirre with 100 men and the 6th '*Castillo*' Regiment under Major Eduardo with 400 men to the Boquerón area, with orders to break the siege the following day. After the reorganisation of both armies, the Paraguayan forces surrounding the fort numbered some 6,000 combatants, but they had not yet been able to completely encircle it, leaving a small clearing in the lines. This would be covered the next day by a new infantry regiment, the 6th '*Boquerón*'. On the Yujra–Boquerón road, the opposing forces outside the fortress had fewer than 1,100 men on each side.

On 17 September, the 6th Regiment '*Boquerón*', under Major Arturo Bray and whose companies and platoons were directed by 18-year-old cadets of the Military School of Asunción, arrived on the battlefield. When these forces began their assault against the fort, they were attacked from the rear by about 110 men of *Detachment Méndez* who had avoided the Ramírez–Boquerón road that was guarded by the Paraguayans. The surprised Paraguayans, being fired upon from the rear, dispersed and lost two cadets – one prisoner in the retreat and another dead in the assault – in addition to two mortars. *Detachment Méndez* then entered Boquerón, bringing supplies, medicines and ammunition to continue resisting the siege. This, the last Bolivian aid received by Marzana, raised the number of defenders to almost 900 effectives. Given the limited amount of supplies available for the number of defenders, it was decided that the auxiliary forces that had entered the fort would have to withdraw in the following 48 hours. The withdrawal cost them almost 50 percent casualties, as the Paraguayans had reorganised and now covered the previously abandoned sector.

It was not until 23 September that the Paraguayan Army perfected the siege around Boquerón. Meanwhile, the Bolivian forces outside the siege continued to press forwards on the only two usable roads on which they were stationed, the Yujra–Boquerón road with *Detachment Peñaranda* and the Ramírez–Boquerón road with *Detachment Méndez*. Lieutenant Colonel Estigarribia carried out an operation to seize the latter road, to the west of the fort with units that he withdrew from the besieging forces, aiming for a simple encirclement, for which he assigned a regiment of cavalry recently arrived at the battlefield, the 3rd Cavalry Regiment '*Coronel Mongelos*'. It was then that Estigarribia



Left, a Bolivian Army platoon. Right, a Paraguayan Army platoon. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)

received unwelcome news that fundamentally altered his plans: the water level of the Isla Po'i lagoon, the base of his operations, began to recede. Water could now only be brought in sufficient quantity from the Paraguay River, which was more than 200km away. Consequently, Estigarribia – who kept the news secret – decided he had to capture Boquerón at any cost.

Meanwhile, there was a curious incident on the Bolivian side. Colonel Peña, commander of the 4th Bolivian Division at Fort Arce, to which the Bolivian soldiers taking part in this battle belonged, had arranged to send an order for the evacuation of Boquerón due to lack of munitions and supplies. This order was going to be dropped from an aircraft, but the plan was aborted by the commander of the Bolivian I Army Corps, General Quintanilla.

On 25 September, the surrounding of *Detachment Méndez* was carried out successfully by Paraguayan forces, causing the Bolivian troops to flee into the forest in a disorganised manner and return to their base at Fort Ramirez. However, they regrouped and formed a new line of defence a few kilometres from Boquerón, on a road that led to Fort Lara. That same day, on the other road, the *Detachment Peñaranda* attempted several attacks on the Paraguayan Regiment 'Corrales', but were repulsed.

By the 26th, the balance of forces had increased in the Paraguayans' favour. There were already some 8,400 Paraguayans – though barely trained – surrounding Fort Boquerón and stopping the advance of Bolivian troops from the nearby forts. The Bolivians had no more than 2,400 troops, which had been in the Chaco for more than two years. The fort was again attacked on all four sides, and also subjected to heavy artillery fire directed by aerial observers, causing the death of several Bolivian officers and many of their men. The following day, Bolivian aircraft dropped packages of food and ammunition, but some fell among the Paraguayan 'Boquerón' Regiment and their contents were immediately distributed.

The following day, in the sector of the 2nd Paraguayan Division, the 1st Regiment '2 de Mayo' suffered heavy losses. The 'Núñez Colmán' Company was reduced to about 40 effectives out of its original 100 troops. The Bolivian forces were also in dire straits, with gunsmith De Torres telling Marzana: 'We do not have any reserve cartridges, just two belts of heavy machinegun ammunition.' Faced with running out of supplies, Marzana decided to distribute the cigarettes that had been dropped by the aircraft to those of his men who were still fighting, along with the two Paraguayan prisoners in the fort, Aquino and González. Bolivian officer Sub-Lieutenant José Daza wrote in his war diary: 'Today I take charge of the sector of Captain Riveros, who was killed the day before. Our troops cannot continue fighting; they are

exhausted; the flesh of our mules is running out. In addition it has been known that the troops have resolved to abandon their positions and raise white flags, but the officers took measures to stop them.'

On 28 September, in the sector of the Paraguayan 2nd Regiment 'Ytororó' to the west of the fort, Captain Vasili Oregief Serebriakoff – a volunteer White Russian serving in the Paraguayan Army – led what is considered one of the most epic assaults of the war: a frontal attack with the 3rd Battalion against the Bolivian fortified line. Soldiers from other battalions also joined the fiercely executed charge. Serebriakoff arrived at a machinegun nest, pistol in hand, and fell mortally wounded. His men remembered that he had uttered some prophetic words that very morning, saying, 'it is a nice day to die.' Inside the fort, the situation was desperate because of the lack of water, food and ammunition, supplies of which had not been received since the 17th.

Marzana assembled his surviving officers and agreed that the next day they would display a flag of parley on part of the fortified line to the north-east of Boquerón – called the 'Punta Brava' by the Paraguayans – and request a meeting between Marzana and Estigarribia to negotiate a capitulation, the delivery of the fort to the Paraguayan Army and the evacuation of the unarmed survivors and wounded to Fort Yujra.

At dawn on 29 September, instead of showing the flag of parley only at the 'Punta Brava', white rags were raised in three or four different places, which the Paraguayans took as a sign of unconditional surrender. The Bolivian negotiator, Captain Salinas, was taken to speak with Lieutenant Colonel Estigarribia but, as confused Paraguayan soldiers entered the fort without any resistance, Marzana decided to surrender in another sector, the north-west, to Paraguayan Major Arturo Bray, Commander of the 6th Regiment 'Boquerón'. Bray, a veteran of the First World War, was known to respect the lives of Bolivians prisoners. Marzana tried to hand over his pistol to Bray as a sign of surrender, but the Paraguayan officer, given his training in the British Army and in consideration of the courage of the Bolivians, chivalrously rejected it.

Marzana was taken to Estigarribia, to whom he finally delivered his pistol and requested the evacuation of his men, which the Paraguayan commander denied but did guarantee Marzana's life and the safety of his men, who along with other prisoners outside the fort were transported to Asunción.



Some of the White Russian volunteer officers in the Paraguayan Army. *Honoris Causa* (HC) was added to the ranks of all foreign volunteer officers. Top row, from left to right, Brigadier General HC Ivan Belaieff, Captain HC Konstantin Gramatchiovoff, Captain HC Vladimir Porfenenko, Captain HC Stephan Vysokolan and Captain HC Boris Dedoff. Bottom row, from left to right, Captain HC Boris Kasianoff, Captain HC Boris Puschkarevich, Brigadier General HC Nikolai Ern, Major HC Sergei Salaskin and Major HC Nikolai Kosakoff. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

THE BATTLES OF SAAVEDRA

First Battle of Saavedra

Paraguayan President Dr Eusebio Ayala had ordered Estigarribia only to retake Fort Boquerón and then return to his base at Isla Po'í to attempt a negotiation with the Bolivians for the peaceful recovery of the forts of Toledo and Corrales. However, the Paraguayan offensive continued in October at the request of Estigarribia, who was promoted to full colonel following the Paraguayan triumph at Boquerón.

The Bolivian troops from outside Boquerón which had survived the battle immediately withdrew to the south, under only moderate pressure from the Paraguayan Army since Estigarribia had ordered rest for those of the I Army Corps who had taken part in the previous combat. On 8 October, the Paraguayans occupied two abandoned Bolivian forts, Ramirez and Castillo. They took Fort Lara on the 11th, and the following day Fort Yujra was also abandoned. On 23 October, the Paraguayan Army captured Fort Arce, a valuable location because of its freshwater lagoons, and also the base of the Bolivian 4th Division. Three days after that, they occupied Fort Alihuatá. The Paraguayan offensive stopped on the road between Saavedra and Boquerón. There the Bolivian Army was reorganised in a strong fortified line and finally halted the Paraguayan offensive. Over the past 45 days, the Bolivian Army had retreated some 90km and lost about 1,000 prisoners. During the retreat, there were the first deaths from thirst in the war. To the west of Arce, about 100 Bolivian corpses, all belonging to the 4th Division, were found by the Paraguayans.

While the demoralised Bolivian troops retreated, the rest of the Bolivian I Army Corps dug trenches across the road, with greater emphasis to the west, and waited for the Paraguayans about 7km from the Bolivian fortress of Saavedra, with a front facing north. The Bolivian defenders, led by the First Army commanders Lieutenant Colonel Bernardino Bilbao Rioja and Colonel Enrique Peñaranda, deployed in an immense field called *Campo Jordán*, which was about 5km from south to north. The Paraguayan column, with the 3rd Regiment 'Corrales' at the head, arrived at *Campo Jordán* and initiated a battle without waiting for the rest of the 2nd Division to which

it belonged, and which was staggered back along the road between Saavedra and Arce.

After three days of heavy frontal combat, the Bolivian commander of the I Army Corps, General Guillén, planned – after 45 days of withdrawal by his troops – a counterattack to envelop the almost 1,000 Paraguayans of Regiment 'Corrales' on his left (east) flank, employing 3,500 men, 12 guns and six aircraft. The manoeuvre should have begun on the night of the 8th but was postponed for 24 hours due to a dispute between Bilbao Rioja, who proposed the operation, and Guillén, about the scope of the attack. On the night of 9 November, the 50th Regiment 'Murgia' led the encirclement of the Regiment 'Corrales', which had just received orders to be

relieved by two battalions – some 600 men – of the 2nd Regiment 'Ytororó'. The relief was being carried out when the Bolivians began the envelopment. The Paraguayans extended their line to the east, where the vanguard of the attacking 'Murgia' Regiment clashed frontally with the defenders in the dead of night.

Elements of the Regiment '2 de Mayo' on the eastern end of the Paraguayan line retreated towards the main road to the place where the Bolivian Regiment 'Murgia' arrived in an incomplete envelopment. Bilbao Rioja had arranged that three other Bolivian regiments – the 'Abaroa', 'Campos' and 'Campero' – attack the Paraguayan line frontally. As he had no news of the success of Regiment 'Murgia', Bilbao Rioja ordered a dawn frontal assault supported by artillery and aviation fire. The assault advanced along the road against the leading Paraguayan positions for 10km, and even reached the command post of Regiment 'Corrales' commander Major Torreani Viera. By noon on 10 November, the involvement of Regiment 'Murgia' from the east had completely stopped, which allowed one of the battalions of Regiment '2 de Mayo' to support Regiment 'Corrales' and halt the Bolivian forces' assault at 2:30 p.m. Under orders from Bilbao Rioja, the Bolivians then retreated at 5:20 p.m.

Describing that first combat in Saavedra, the Paraguayan military historian Lieutenant Colonel Antonio E. González, who fought in the war, wrote:

Wrapped in bursts of artillery shells, mortars, and hand grenades, under thick smoke of gunpowder and dirt, machinegunned by combat planes flying at ground level, under the rays of a sun of fire, Paraguayans and Bolivians fought with unprecedented ferocity, with shots, with machetes, with knives, with shovel blows, with rifle butts, with kicks and punches.

The recorded Bolivian casualties from the battle amounted to 40 dead, 250 wounded and 87 missing, while Paraguayan casualties were 64 dead, 25 injured and 50 missing.



Bolivian Army Krupp guns captured in Fort Boquerón. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)

Second Battle of Saavedra

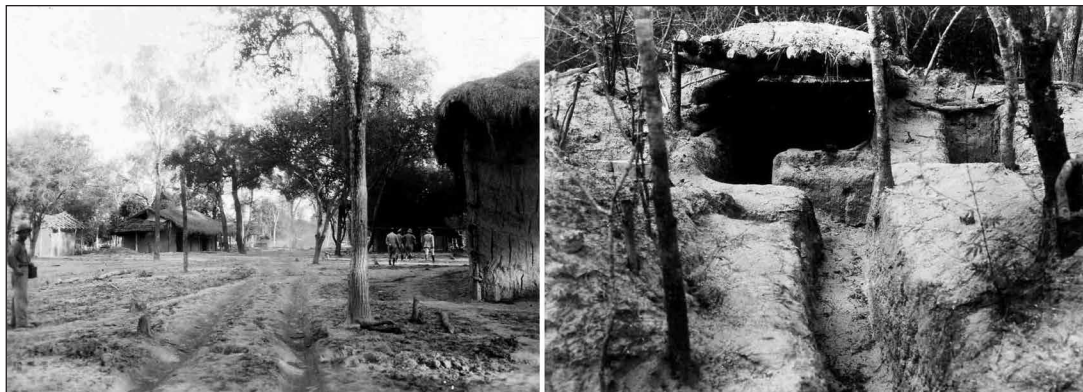
The second Battle of Saavedra is the most famous in Bolivia, and in this case, unlike the previous encounter, the Paraguayans had the initiative. Colonel Estigarribia had arranged for the 1st Division to move against the Bolivian positions 7km from Saavedra, instead of the 2nd Division. The commander of the 1st Division, Lieutenant Colonel Carlos Fernandez, suggested that Estigarribia carry out a night encirclement of the Bolivian left wing, from the west, then turn to the south and end up on the road behind the Bolivian lines which linked Fort Saavedra with Fort Muñoz, the latter being the headquarters of Colonel Guillén's I Army Corps, and take Saavedra from the rear. Everything had to be done on foot using a path in the thick forest that was no more than a metre wide. This path had previously been patrolled by Sergeant Julio Sosa and his men to determine its suitability. The departure of the surrounding column was arranged for 9 p.m., and four hours were allowed to travel the 12km to the Saavedra–Muñoz road.

Four Paraguayan regiments were summoned to meet at the concentration site to start the manoeuvre. The 2nd Infantry Regiment 'Ytororó' and 2nd Cavalry Regiment 'Coronel Toledo' arrived at 11 p.m., while the 4th Regiment and 2nd Artillery Group were already

waiting. A cavalry squadron commanded by Major Barrios had previously been led by Sergeant Sosa's patrol to the Saavedra–Muñoz road, and was to be deployed to stop Bolivian troops from Muñoz assisting at Saavedra. However, the patrol inexplicably failed return to the concentration site in time to guide the rest of the division, so the division was without its guides. Consequently, 3,780 Paraguayan soldiers of the 1st Division were left in the dark and without their guides before the manoeuvre began.

Fernandez considered all options, including postponing the operation, but, unable to communicate with Estigarribia due to the lack of telephone lines, decided to keep the element of surprise. He decided to continue the assault, maintaining the safety of the Paraguayan units that were to tie down the Bolivian 5th Division – which was detached at Saavedra at the time – and look for the link with Barrios's squadron that, it was hoped, would have cut the road behind Saavedra, although there was no news from them. Fernandez ordered the departure of his division at midnight on 30 November, three hours late, with Regiment 'Ytororó' leading the way, followed by Regiment 'Curupaty'.

Everything was delayed due to the absence of the patrol guide. The column was divided in two when the head of the 'Curupaty' became



Right, Fort Arce, after being conquered by the Paraguayan Army. Left, a machinegun nest and trench at Fort Arce. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)

detached from the tail of the '*Ytororó*' and turned directly towards the Bolivian positions before the envelopment took place. The Bolivian advanced positions noticed the movement and opened fire at 5 a.m. The regiments that were lined up behind the '*Curupayty*' – the '*Colonel Mongelos*', the artillery (dismantled and brought on the backs of mules) and the '*Colonel Toledo*' – received no fire.

Once the Paraguayan manoeuvre was discovered and the element of surprise was lost, a period began of several days of unsuccessful Paraguayan attempts to assault the Bolivian line. On 6 December, the original envelopment was tried once again in the west. Colonel Estigarribia sent a topographer to study the terrain and take the correct measurements to avoid the errors of the first day, but the news that the 5th Division in Nanawa (near Saavedra, and that had to press from the southeast) was being attacked, forced Fernandez to desist again from the deployment and repeat the assaults. On the 7th, the entire 1st Paraguayan Division approached the Bolivian outposts. Some units advanced 1,500 metres, while others were immobilised by the Bolivian artillery, but still the division was close enough to launch an assault the following day. On 8 December, the '*Ytororó*' was launched against the Bolivian line, but was stopped after advancing just 70 metres, and when it tried again the next day it suffered significant losses.

suffered 58 dead, 247 injured and 18 missing.

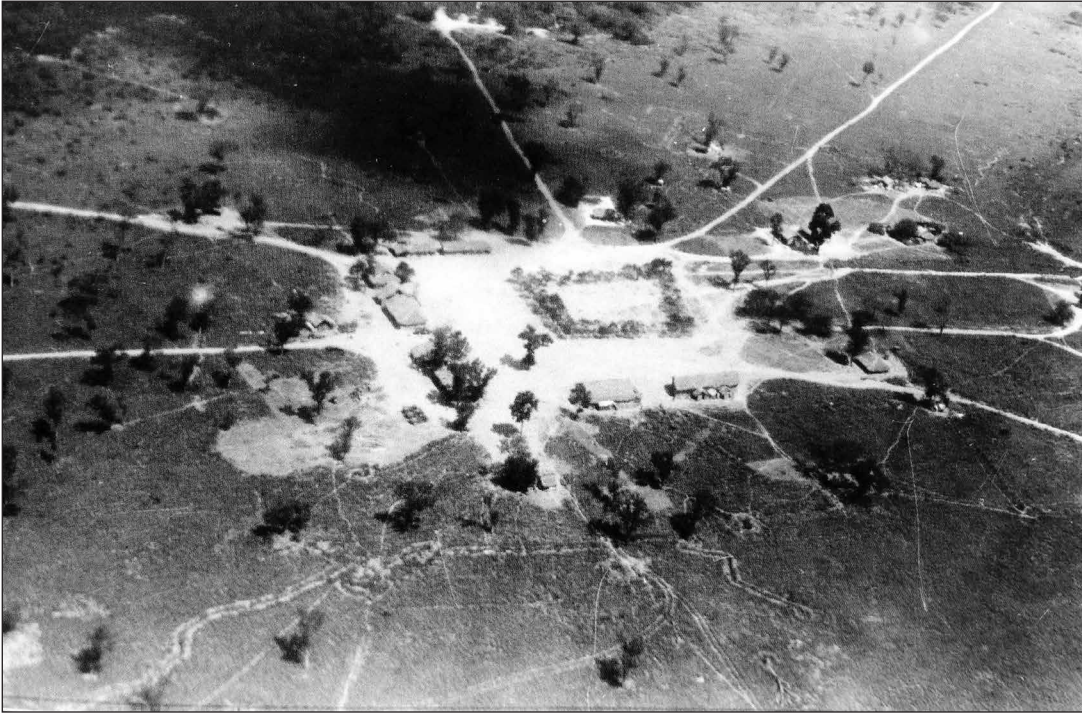
Third Battle of Saavedra

Colonel Estigarribia ordered the 1st Paraguayan Division to retreat to the north bank of *Campo Jordán*, 12km along the Saavedra–Boquerón road, where they fortified themselves strongly and deployed their now reduced 2,774 men of the Regiments '*Ytororó*', '*Curupayty*' and '*Coronel Toledo*', and the 2nd Artillery Group with eight 105mm and 75mm guns. The withdrawal, which was made under a Christmas ceasefire, encouraged the Bolivians to try again their failed manoeuvre of 10 November, mainly inspired by the new commander-in-chief of the Bolivian Army, the German General Hans Kundt, who was known for his inclination for frontal attacks. Consequently, the commander of the I Army Corps, General Guillen, ordered an attack with 10 regiments, artillery and aviation, totalling about 3,200 men, who had to leave their positions and advance about 4km through *Campo Jordán* to make the assault over the final 1,000 metres to the strong Paraguayan positions.

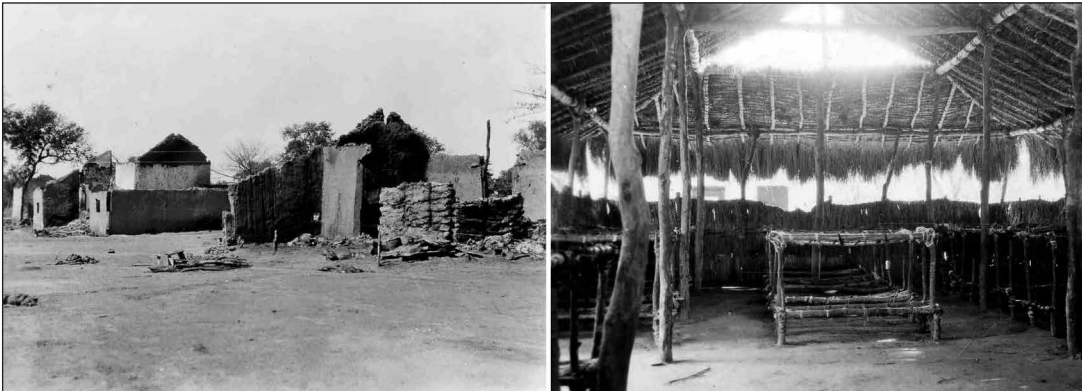
A general assault was made against the line, with several breakthroughs made that were pushed back with help from the 7th Regiment '*24 de Mayo*', which was urgently sent from the 4th Paraguayan Division. The Bolivians, trusting in the support of their



A Paraguayan Army company at Fort Alihuatá. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



An aerial view of Fort Alihuatá. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)



Left, Fort Saavedra after being taken by the Paraguayan Army. Right, the troop barracks at Fort Saavedra. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden)

artillery, did not stop advancing all day, but suffered heavy losses. At dusk, they were ordered to retreat back to their starting base.

The Paraguayan casualties were very low, while Guillén falsified the Bolivian losses to Kundt, speaking of only nine dead and 333 injured. When queried by Kundt on the disproportion between the killed and wounded, Guillén clarified that it was only the dead in the hospitals of Saavedra. The Paraguayans – who stayed in their positions during the clash – buried some 220 Bolivian bodies that had been abandoned on the battlefield. Paraguayan booty included about 500 rifles.

With these three battles in *Campo Jordán* – comprising two Paraguayan victories and one for the Bolivians, all being defensive successes – the year 1932 ended. The Bolivians had stopped the first Paraguayan offensive, and with an epidemic of avitaminosis and tuberculosis in the Paraguayan I Army Corps, they had to go on the defensive and even gave up ground to the Bolivians.

3

FIRST HALF OF 1933 – THE BOLIVIAN COUNTEROFFENSIVE.

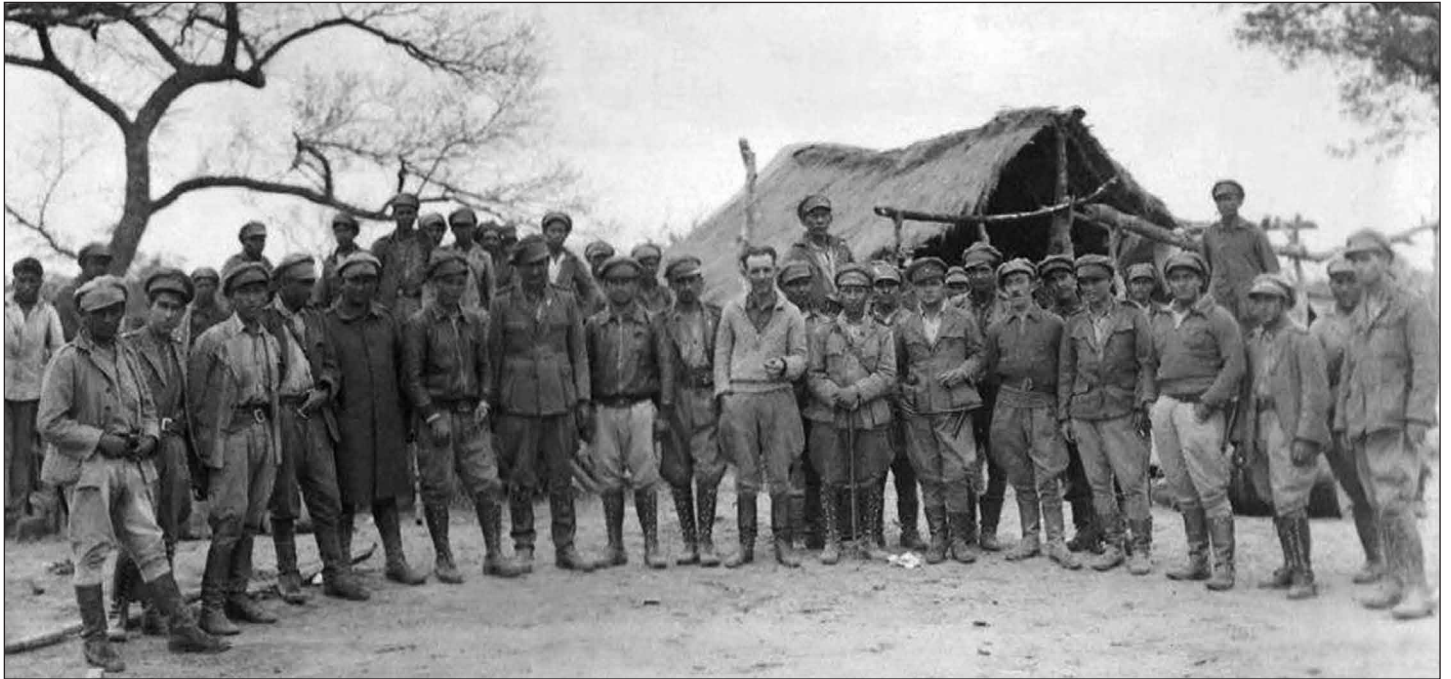
The year of 1933 began with several actions. The Bolivian commander, General Kundt – recently reincorporated into the Bolivian ranks as supreme commander of the forces in the Chaco Boreal – launched a quick counterattack to surprise the Paraguayan Army, dividing his main effort between the north (Toledo) and south (Nanawa) of the Paraguayan deployment. The Bolivians had already recovered Platanillos (on 27 December) and captured the Paraguayan forts of Corrales (2 January) and Mcal. López (8 January). On the 21st, they tried unsuccessfully to recover Herrera (called Fernández by the Bolivians). Kundt committed his first great mistake in this war, of the several he would make, directing his army to Nanawa.

The First Battle of Nanawa

General Kundt arranged the first major action in charge of his II Army Corps under the premise of achieving an envelopment of the left wing of the entire Paraguayan deployment, that would lead him behind it so as to cut the supply of the 1st Division of the Paraguayan Army, which

– as the main objective of the I Army Corps – he wanted to liquidate. He decided, therefore, to first of all take the Paraguayan fortress at Nanawa.

For this, Kundt had his 7th Division headed by Colonel Gerardo Rodríguez, and three detachments were formed. The column of Lieutenant Colonel Julio Bretel, with the 16th (*Beni*) and 42nd Regiments, plus part of the 5th (*Lanza*) and 7th (*Chichas*) Regiments, would operate to the south of Nanawa. In the centre, the column commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Julio Quiroga comprised the 18th (*Ayacucho*) Regiment and part of the 1st (*Abaroa*) Regiment. To the north, the column commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Jacinto Reque Terán would carry the main weight of the operation, with three regiments – the 7th, 19th and 26th – plus part of the 1st and 5th Regiments. In battle, four more regiments – the 18th, 22nd, 41st and 43rd – were also involved. Bolivia deployed a total of 6,000 men against some 2,500 Paraguayan defenders of the 5th Division under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Luis Irrazábal in Nanawa,



Bolivian Army officers, NCOs and soldiers. (Bolivian Army Archives)



A Paraguayan Army convoy to Fort Saavedra. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden)



Left, Paraguayan infantry aiming their Mauser rifles. Right, a Bolivian Army patrol with a Vickers heavy machinegun. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

grouped into five regiments (the 7th and 13th of infantry, and the 3rd, 4th and 5th of cavalry, who fought on foot because of the impossibility of keeping their horses).

The Bolivian offensive began from west to east on the night of 19 January, the northern column (*Detachment Reque Terán*) advancing northeast through the '*Picada Ruck*' and then east. Heavy rain during the night and early morning markedly delayed the column, putting it well behind schedule for the battle. At the agreed signal, the centre column, under Quiroga, advanced towards Nanawa and deployed on both sides of the road that led to the Paraguayan fort. The Bolivians, in the centre and the south, quickly reached the fort, where Paraguayan

resistance grew stronger. Only at dawn on the 21st did Reque Terán and his column leave the forest on the Paraguayan right flank at a place called '*Isla Fortificada*' (Fortified Island) by the Bolivians and '*Punta Mojoli*' by the Paraguayans.

During 21 and 22 January, the three Bolivian detachments struggled forward without being able to dent the Paraguayan defence. On the 23rd, the Paraguayans received a reinforcement of 1,000 men from the north that the Bolivians were unable to stop, neutralising Reque Terán's northern column, and Quiroga's centre column in their attempts to capture the fort. The Paraguayans were at this stage totally depleted of ammunition, so an improvised airstrip was

urgently prepared and at a given moment, when General Kundt was in the southern sector to organise the Bolivian attack, four Paraguayan Potez 25 bombers descended – one behind the other – unloading about 300kg of 7.65mm ammunition. Kundt then tried a new attack from the south with Bretel, and arranged for a newly arrived regiment, the 41st '*Colorados*', to attack from behind the Paraguayan positions at 6 a.m. on 24 January.

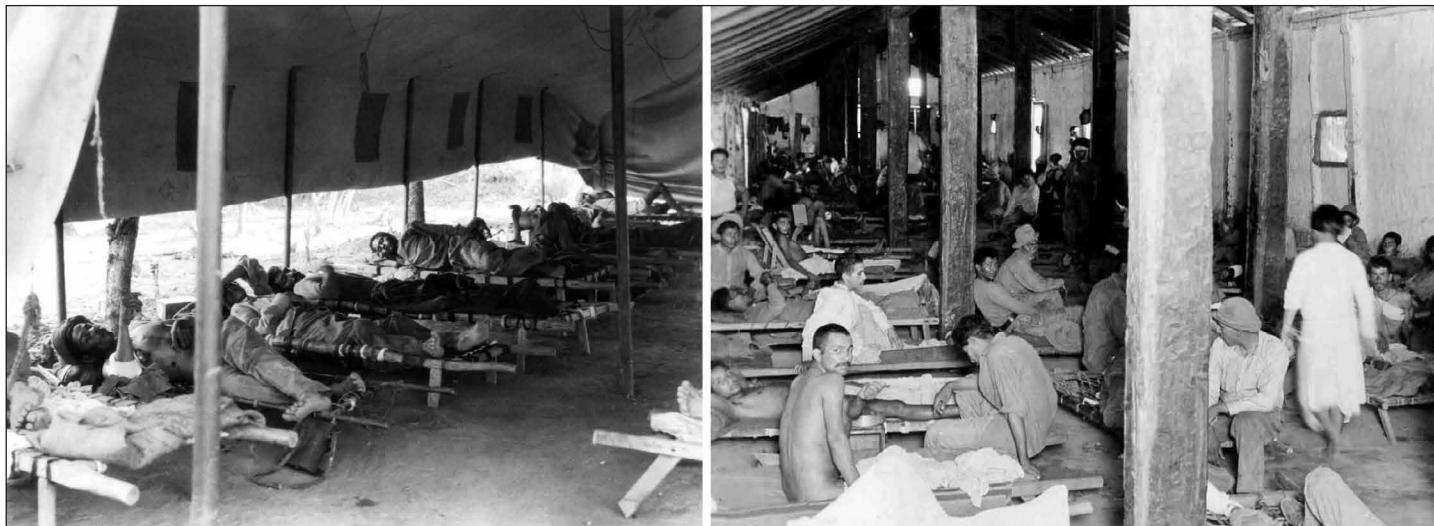
The 41st Regiment of Major Pantoja, with 400 men – but without flank protection or reserves to exploit its success (another error of Kundt's) – obtained an important infiltration that took them near the field kitchens of the fort. However, they were violently counterattacked by elements of the Paraguayan Army, with the 4th and 5th Cavalry Regiments and 7th and 13th Infantry Regiments surrounding Pantoja and his troops. The Bolivians – attacked on two flanks – suffered an appalling slaughter, losing some 200 men to automatic gunfire and being beheaded with machetes in hand-to-hand fighting. Lieutenant Rodriguez, commander of the 4th Cavalry Regiment detachment, succeeded in expelling the Bolivians from the forest but was killed during the course of the action. Another Paraguayan detachment, that of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment, arrived late to the attack, allowing the Bolivian survivors of the 41st Regiment to escape. A subsequent Paraguayan counterattack in the north caused the Bolivians of *Detachment Reque Terán* to partially abandon their starting



Paraguayan Army trucks carrying guns to the battlefield. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



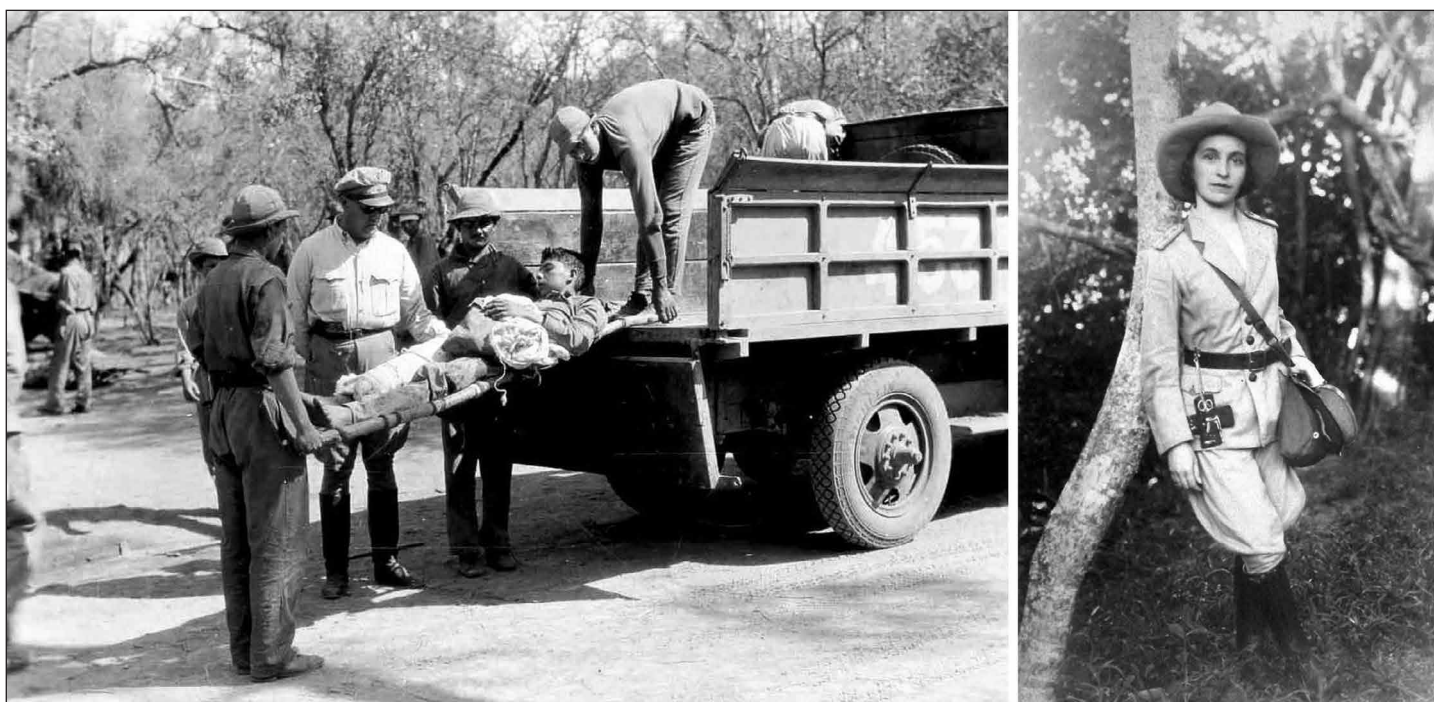
Bolivian Army Vickers 105mm guns. (Bolivian Army Archives)



Left, Paraguayan Army field hospital at Fort Boquerón. Right, Paraguayan Army field hospital at Fort Isla Po'i. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



Left, Paraguayan Army Health Corps Chevrolet ambulances at Fort Isla Po'i. Right, a Paraguayan Red Cross ambulance in the Chaco. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



Left, a wounded Paraguayan soldier being inspected by Major Dr Lofruscio. Right, Paraguayan Army 2nd Lieutenant Clotilde Pinho Insfrán, a chemist-pharmacist and volunteer nurse. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



The Paraguayan Army dental service at Fort Isla Po'i. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



Bolivian Army officers, NCOs and soldiers proudly posing with a Vickers E-Type tank. (Bolivian Army Archives)

positions on the edge of a forest, which were recovered after a bombardment by the Bolivian artillery. When the Bolivians re-entered their positions, they found the bodies of four soldiers with their throats cut by machetes. From that moment, the place was renamed '*La Punta de los cuatro degollados*' (The Tip of the four slaughtered). The position was about 80 metres from the '*Punta Mojoli*', which remained in Paraguayan hands throughout 1933, even after a second major battle there in July.

Bolivian historians have not wanted to provide figures of its army's casualties at the First Battle of Nanawa, but they have been estimated at more than 1,500, with about 400 killed. Paraguayan casualties were estimated at approximately 200, including about 100 killed.

The Battle of Toledo

After his first big failure at Nanawa, Kundt moved the centre of gravity of his attack to the north in February and focused on Toledo, where he placed the 3rd Division and about 3,600 men. His attack began

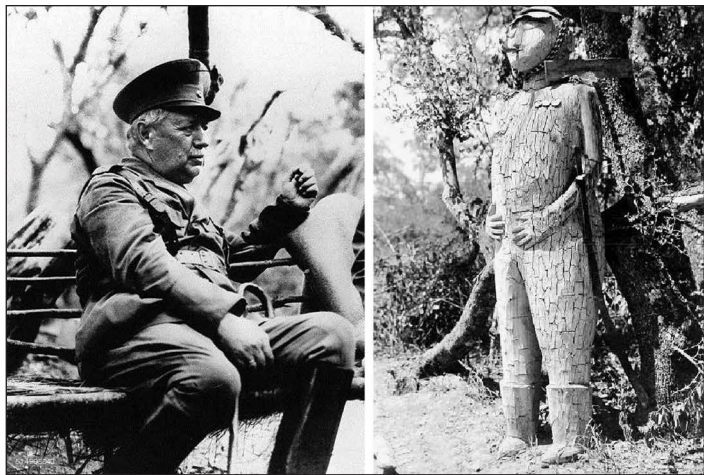
on 26 February and the battle lasted until 11 March, when the Bolivian Army abandoned its attempt after suffering some 1,200 casualties, that included 400 killed, along with a Curtiss Osprey plane shot down by Paraguayan anti-aircraft fire. Paraguayan forces suffered some 250 casualties, including 50 killed.

Toledo was a unique battle in the Chaco War. The Paraguayan fort there was defended by the II Army Corps. It was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Juan B. Ayala, nicknamed '*Ayala Va!*' (Ugly Ayala), who ordered a new defensive system of infantry cadres known as '*resistance centres*', something never before used in this war and different from the traditional continuous front-line system. He placed his artillery in two groups to be able to saturate with regulated fire the spaces that were purposely left free. Colonel Quintela, the Bolivian commander of the attacking 3rd Division, labelled it a '*chessboard*' defensive system. The Bolivian soldiers struck again and again against the Paraguayan lines, bleeding their units. Their reverse at Toledo led to a rapid Bolivian retreat under forced conditions, which caused the mutiny of two complete regiments – the 9th and 30th – which fled to a Bolivian fortress other than that ordered in the retreat. Kundt himself said in his report to the government: '*Matters came to such a state*

that the commander of the II Corps requested the use of the air force against the mutineers.' The two regiments were subsequently dissolved and their leaders punished.

The Reconquest of Alihuatá

On 11 March 1933, Bolivia recaptured Fort Alihuatá, which it had lost the previous year, but failed to destroy the 1st Paraguayan Division, which retreated towards Fort Gondra. The manoeuvre, the first that the Bolivian Army carried out within the Chaco forest since the war began, was undertaken by the 9th Division, led by Lieutenant Colonel Victorino Gutiérrez. A path of some 50km was opened up in the forest parallel to the Alihuatá–Saavedra road, which was occupied by the Paraguayans up to 12km from Alihuatá. Once the path reached Puesto Charata, it turned right and left behind Alihuatá, a former Bolivian fortress that had been held by the Paraguayans since October of the previous year.



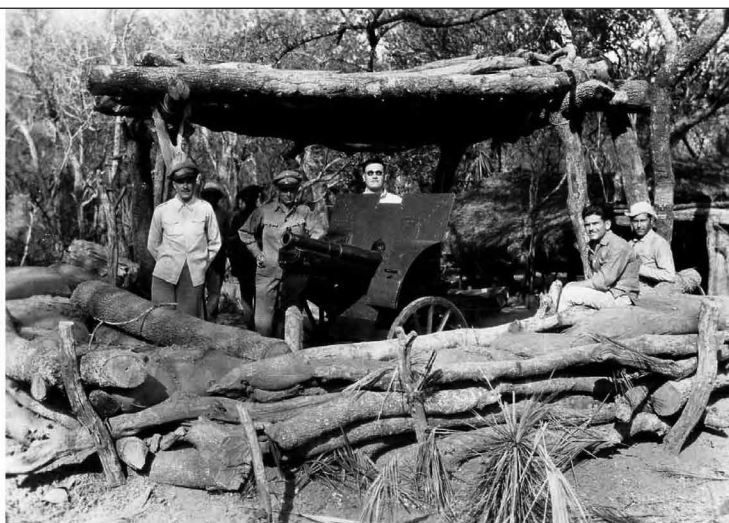
Left, General Hans Kundt, a German First World War veteran, as commander-in-chief of the Bolivian Army (*Bolivian Army Archives*). Right, a wooden statue of General Kundt, with all the details (cap, cigar, medals and sword) carved by a Paraguayan soldier prankster on the trunk of a Samu'u tree, and erected at a crossroads in the Chaco for all to see. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



The then Lieutenant Colonel Luis Irrazábal, commander of the Paraguayan 5th Division in Nanawa. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



Paraguayan Army Ford trucks with troops near Fort Nanawa. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



Left, the Paraguayan Army's Fort Nanawa. Right, a Paraguayan 75mm Vickers gun at Nanawa. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



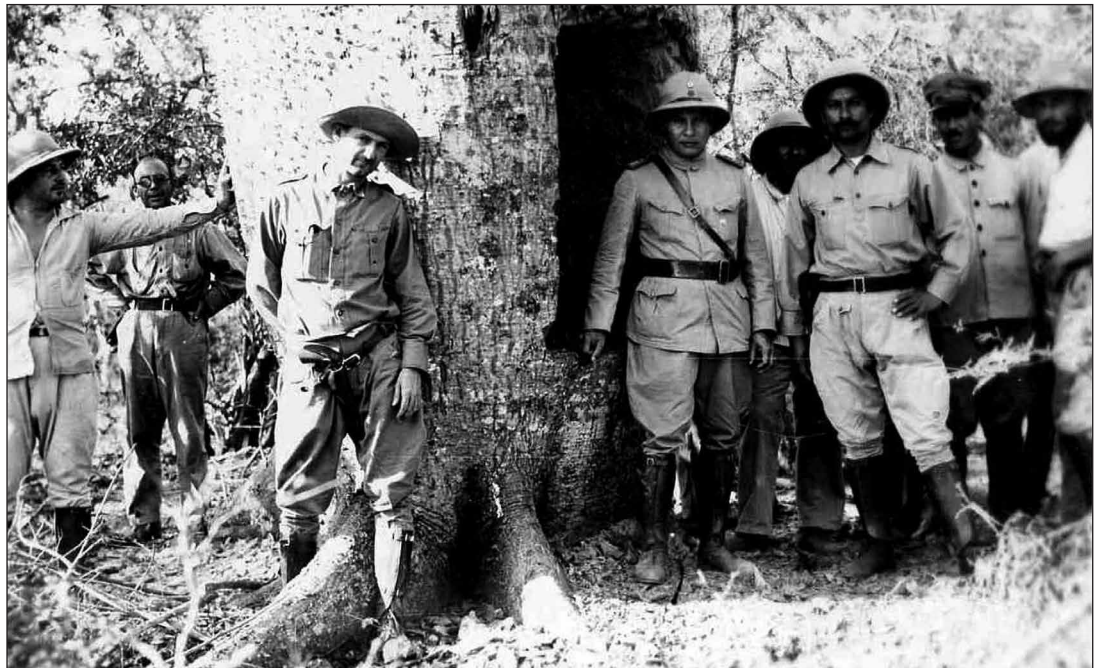
A Bolivian Army 65mm Vickers gun and crew. (Bolivian Army Archives)



A Bolivian Army private killed in a trench at Nanawa. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

Gutiérrez led the column with a squadron of the legendary 5th Regiment ‘Lanza’ (whose members were noted for their bravery, being the only ones to escape the siege of Fort Boquerón) and was followed by three more regiments (the ‘Campos’, ‘Chacaltaya’ and ‘Illimani’). However, a Paraguayan patrol discovered the column and informed the fort. Subsequently, some 250 Paraguayans waited for the Bolivian assault, causing about 150 casualties among the attackers, who were forced to retreat and spend the night in the surrounding forest. The next day they entered Alihuatá, which had been abandoned overnight by the Paraguayans.

On 26 March, Fort Herrera came under a second Bolivian assault, but again drove away the attackers.



Paraguayan Army officers posing next to a sentry post carved in a huge Samu'u tree trunk near Fort Toledo. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)

The Battle of Campo Jordán

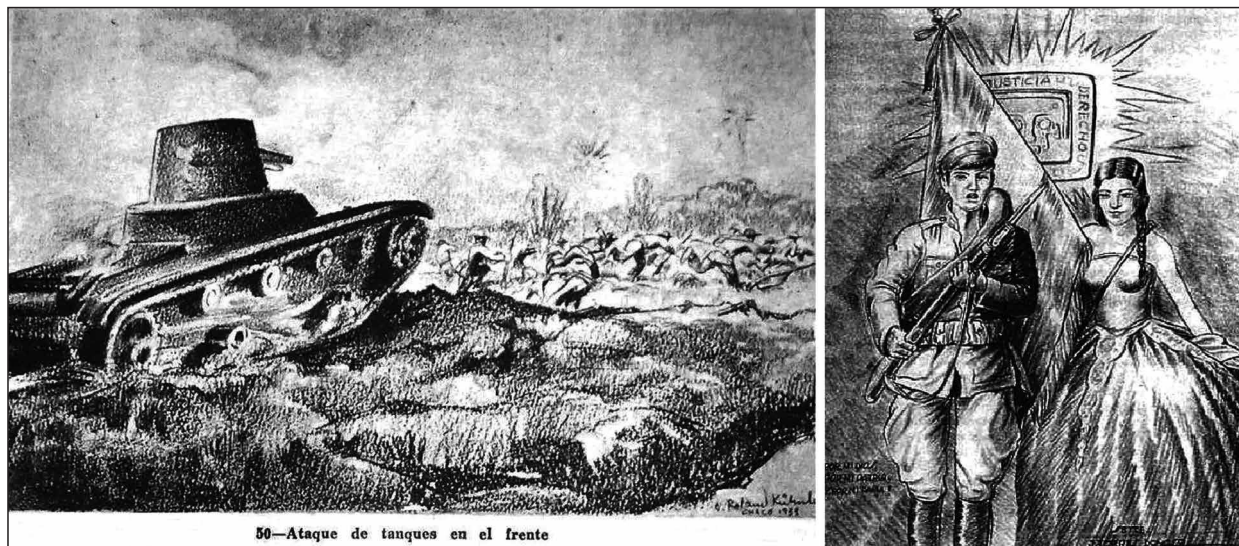
A brief clash took place behind the 1st Paraguayan Division, 12km along the Alihuatá–Saavedra road. The commander of the 1st Paraguayan Division, Lieutenant Colonel Fernandez, had already been told by Bolivian prisoners that the reconquest of Alihuatá was under way. He subsequently alerted Colonel Estigarribia of the situation and requested authorisation to withdraw his forces to Gondra that day, 11 March.

On 12 March, a Bolivian squadron of the Regiment ‘Lanza’, under the command of Major Eduardo, managed to get behind the 1st Division on the Alihuatá–Saavedra road, but after a brief fight they withdrew, with Eduardo wounded. During the following days, fighting continued between the 1st Paraguayan and 4th Bolivian Divisions. On the 14th, Estigarribia ordered Fernandez to resist since he was organising a force to retake Alihuatá, and asked him to stay in his positions until the 20th. Fernandez insisted on abandoning his positions and warned that he would not be able to follow his orders. A meeting of the regiment leaders on 15 March decided to withdraw to

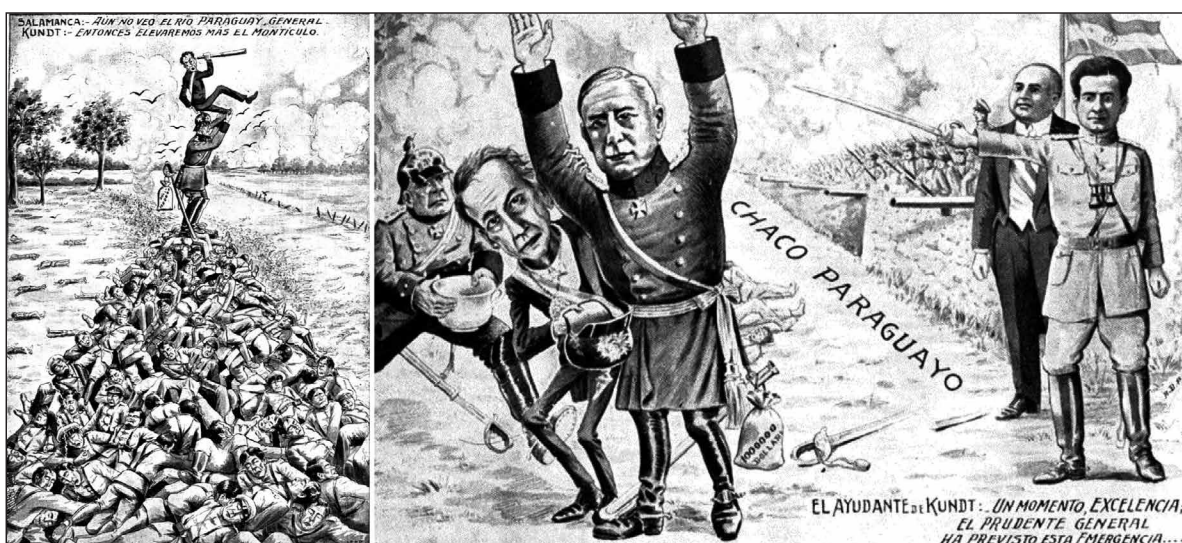
Gondra. At 11 p.m. on the 16th, Estigarribia authorised the withdrawal of the troops, which began the following afternoon, the 1st Division successfully relocating to its new front at Gondra.

This Paraguayan withdrawal was the first carried out by its troops in seven months of offensive actions. Lieutenant Colonel Fernandez had warned about the possibility of losing all the heavy matériel, including the artillery, but he managed to save almost everything other than 60 boxes of rifle ammunition that were buried somewhere along the road from Alihuatá to Saavedra. The guns were towed by the soldiers themselves. The Chilean Colonel Vergara Vicuña, a volunteer in the Bolivian Army, praised the withdrawal as ‘all a success’ (*sic*), which apparently occurred because the Bolivian soldiers of the 4th Division that faced the retreating 1st Paraguayan Division did not notice their absence until the 18th.

The Bolivians spent the entire month of April attacking the Paraguayan line from Toledo to Nanawa, and then passing through Gondra, but without decisive results.



A sample of Bolivian propaganda. (Bolivian Army Archives)



Two postcards widely distributed during the Chaco War. The one on the left shows the President of Bolivia, Dr Daniel Salamanca, on General Hans Kundt's head, saying, 'I cannot see the Paraguay River yet, General!' Kundt answers, 'Then we need to pile up more corpses.' The postcard on the right shows General Estigarribia and President Ayala expelling Kundt out of the Chaco. Kundt's assistant says, 'Just a moment your excellency' while thinking, 'The prudent general has foreseen this emergency' and giving him his Prussian helmet. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

4

SECOND HALF OF 1933 – DECLINE OF THE BOLIVIAN COUNTEROFFENSIVE

Second Battle of Nanawa

Having established the main front from Fernandez to Nanawa, General Kundt, urged on by the Bolivian need to achieve a resounding result that had eluded them since the beginning of the war, determined to use novel weapons and greater numbers for a second attack on the Paraguayan fortification at Nanawa and its surroundings, ignoring the advice of practically all his subordinates. At the end of May and throughout June, several indications of the forthcoming Bolivian offensive were discovered by the Paraguayans, which were corroborated by Bolivian prisoners. This time, Kundt would try again with more men, more artillery and new equipment such as flamethrowers and armoured vehicles.

As there was no adequate armament available to counteract the armour of the Bolivian tanks, the first line of Paraguayan trenches were excavated to a greater depth to protect their occupants. In front of them, a complex network of creeping wire fences was placed, reinforced at intervals of 30–40 metres with high-explosive mines made by Paraguayan workers. Along the Nanawa–Mcal. Lopez line and throughout the southern front of the fort, anti-tank obstacles consisting of large and deep ditches were built. The stretches of trenches, initially isolated, were gradually joined together to create a fortification several kilometres long.

The Bolivians, entrenched to the west and south of the fort from the first battle in January, deployed the 7th Division led by Colonel Gerardo Rodriguez, which was distributed in a somewhat strange way



A Paraguayan officer next to a huge Samu'u tree near Fort Toledo. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden)

since not all troops were designated to take part in the main assault. They were deployed as follows:

- Northern Sector (commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Quiroga): for the siege, 39th Regiment and two battalions of 22nd Regiment;
- for the assault, 7th and 38th Regiments and a company of 39th Regiment; in reserve, 3rd and 7th Regiments.
- This sector had two 75mm Schneider MPC2 guns, one 65mm Vickers MK EE gun, a battery (Chavez) of four 75mm guns and a battery (Vizcarra) of four 105mm howitzers.
- Central Sector (Lieutenant Colonel Ballón): for the siege, 18th Infantry Regiment;
- for the assault, 18th Regiment combat groups;
- in reserve, 111th Detachment. The artillery was composed of a single battery (Torres) of four 75mm guns.
- Southern Sector (Lieutenant Colonel Frias):
- for the siege, heavy machineguns;
- for the assault, 16th, 42nd and 43rd Regiments;
- in reserve, the 3rd, 5th and 41st Cavalry Regiments.
- The artillery was composed of a battery of four 75mm guns, two 65mm Vickers MK EE cannons, a battery (Seleme) of four 75mm guns and a battery (Rios) of four 105mm howitzers.

In total, the 7th Bolivian Division fielded 29 guns, five armoured vehicles, eight flamethrowers and some 6,400 men, of which only 2,500 were assigned for the first assaults. Kundt's reserve had a similar number of troops.

Facing them was the Paraguayan 5th Division that had defended the fort in January, reinforced by the artillery of the brand new III Army Corps commanded by Captain Juan Rovira, with 75mm and 105mm 1919 model French Schneider guns. The 4th Division, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Arturo Bray, was also in the vicinity.

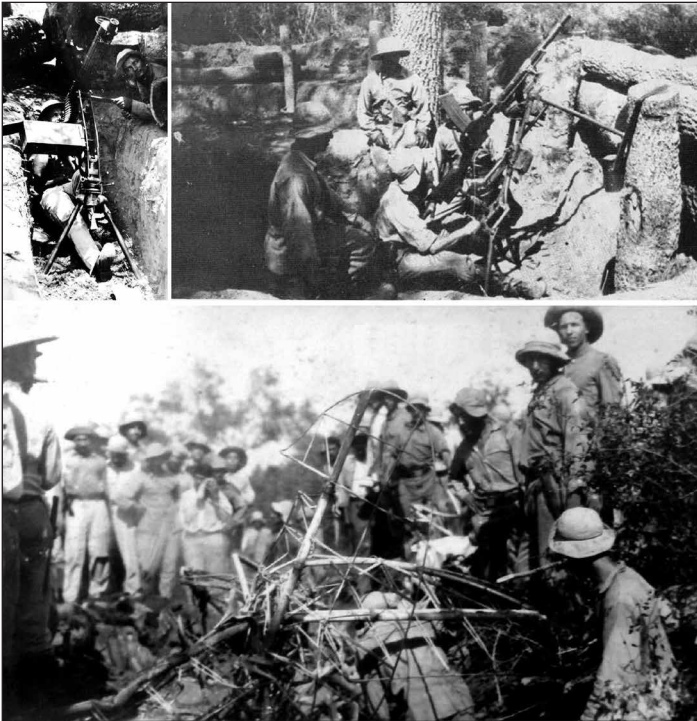
In the fort and its surroundings, the Paraguayan 5th Division had the 7th and 13th Infantry Regiments and the 3rd, 4th and 5th Cavalry Regiments, plus various independent elements, all located in the same line, with only two reserve rifle battalions, for a total of about 3,200 men in well-fortified trenches. The old 1905 model 75mm Krupp cannons were placed to the south to face the Bolivian infantry, who only had old 'shrapnel' shells. Taking the troops of the 4th Division and other elements into account, the Paraguayan Army had a total of 6,500 soldiers in the area.

At 8:55 a.m. on the morning of 4 July, after a bombardment by the artillery and aviation, the explosion of an underground mine that the Bolivians installed through a tunnel in front of the Paraguayan trenches at '*Punta Mojoli*' gave the signal for the beginning of the assault. The entire western and northern front of the Paraguayan lines was assaulted, including the '*Isla Vera*' to the '*Reducto*'. In front of the '*Isla Peña*', two Bolivian Vickers tanks joined the attack, one a Type A and the other a Type B. The latter tank advanced firing its 47mm cannon, but its right track struck a landmine that damaged the right-hand wheel. The tank was brought to a halt by the explosion, which killed all the crew except the driver. The other tank crossed the Paraguayan lines and reached the central forest but returned for lack of infantry support without causing any great damage to the Paraguayan forces.

With the exception of about 100 metres of the trenches of '*Punta Mojoli*' on the northern front, led by 2nd Lieutenant Eloy Cañiza, the entire Paraguayan line was occupied by the Bolivians within an hour of the attack, the armoured vehicles and the use of flamethrowers playing a decisive role due to the fear aroused in the Paraguayan defenders not accustomed to facing such weapons in combat. The Bolivians very cleverly took advantage of the communication ditch between '*Punta Mojoli*' and '*Punta Norte*' and managed to take the '*Reducto*' area from the rear, as well as part of the '*Punta Norte*'.



Bolivian President Daniel Salamanca (first row with black suit) with his Army Chiefs of Staff. Some of them were later involved in a coup against him. (Bolivian Army Archives)



A captured Bolivian Vickers heavy machinegun (left) and a Madsen machinegun (right), used by the Paraguayan 8th Infantry Regiment 'Piribebuy' to shoot down a Curtiss Osprey (below) during the Battle of Toledo. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

On the southern front, three Bolivian armoured vehicles – a Vickers Type A tank and two Carden Lloyd tankettes – advanced toward the Paraguayan 13th Infantry Regiment positions but were thwarted by the deep anti-tank ditches. One tankette was stopped by a trench and the other two tanks returned to their starting points with mechanical damage. The attack of the Bolivian infantry in the southern sector failed miserably, as the rolling artillery barrage planned for the area was calculated on European premises of time that were inapplicable to the Chaco terrain. The heavy machinegun nests of the 13th Regiment soon stopped being bombarded by the guns of Seleme and Rios, who advanced their fire to the interior of the Central Island, under the assumption that the Bolivian infantry were already in the Paraguayan trenches. This gross miscalculation allowed the Paraguayans to strafe the unprotected advancing Bolivian infantrymen. From noon

onwards, until the end of the battle, there was no further action on the southern front.

At 10:30 a.m., the Paraguayan Command ordered an artillery bombardment – their first of the day – on all the positions lost to the Bolivians in the west and north as the opening move of their counterattack. A short but frantic Paraguayan artillery fire struck all the Bolivian infantry occupying Paraguayan trenches, including the Paraguayan Cañiza and his men – who were thought killed in the first Bolivian assault, but received more than 100 rounds from their own artillery. However, the Paraguayan counterattack managed to retake only the

'Punta Norte' and the first 100 metres of the 'Reducto' communication ditch.

From Fort Nanawa, Lieutenant Alfredo Plá, commanding veteran troops selected from various units, launched another counterattack to retake the 'Peña' and 'Mojoli' positions from the Bolivians, and decided to do so using only the communications ditches without exposing themselves to observation. He equipped his soldiers with bags of friction grenades known as '*carumbe-í*' ('small turtle' in the Guaraní language), manufactured by the Paraguayan Navy Arsenal, and personally headed the counterattack at 1:45 p.m. Along the way he captured a flamethrower and slowly dislodged the Bolivians soldiers, who retreated to their starting points. Interestingly, when arriving at 'Punta Mojoli' in the late evening, he halted the advance, assuming that the Bolivians were strongly positioned there, unaware that they had withdrawn, leaving only the Paraguayan Cañiza and his men there.

Later that night, at 10 p.m., the commander of the 1st Battalion of the 24th Infantry Regiment, Lieutenant Jenaro Espinola – who had lost all his trenches and recovered only the 'Punta Norte' – arranged with Captain Rovira for a 105mm artillery barrage to be started at 6:00 a.m. the next day to cover the second counterattack in his sector to recover the only place that was still in Bolivian hands, the 'Reducto'.

At 'H' hour on 5 July, the fire of the Paraguayan howitzers fell with amazing precision over the 'Reducto' and the communication ditch with the 'Punta Norte', where two groups of Bolivian fighters crowded together: those who had retreated from the first Paraguayan counter and those who had arrived as reinforcements the previous night under cover of darkness. Many of the defenders were killed. The second Paraguayan counterattack then moved through the communication trench and over open ground, and within an hour they had retaken the 'Reducto'. Some 1,500 Bolivians died within a space of no more than 300 square metres. Only 25 Bolivian soldiers survived, being taken prisoner along with Lieutenant Reyes Laguna.

Further Bolivian assaults were made on the afternoon of 5 July and all day on the 6th, but without success, failing to reach the recently recovered Paraguayan lines. None of the Bolivian armoured vehicles were still operating. Not wishing to leave it in Paraguayan hands, the Bolivians tried without success to destroy with artillery fire their own Vickers Type B tank, which was stuck in front of the 'Peña' position. During the night of 8 July, Paraguayan 2nd Lieutenant Pedro Moreno

Sartorio – an explosives expert with the 5th Division – crawled to the tank and attached several mines with battery-operated electric detonators. When the mines were detonated, the turret blew off the tank and the chassis was turned on its back, leaving its tracks in the air. The Paraguayans celebrated obtaining this trophy of war, although the turret was later returned to Bolivia in 1994, along with a Vickers Type A tank that was used on the south front at Nanawa and captured at *Campo Via* six months later.

On 14 July, after the battle was over, the commander of the Paraguayan Army, General Estigarribia, visited the '*Punta Norte*' and its surroundings, later writing in his memoirs: 'I witnessed the most horrific spectacle that I can remember in my life ... along that sector that the Bolivians had taken, fragments of legs and arms torn off by the explosions of the howitzers, were still hanging from the trees.'

Also during July, in the front at Gondra, some 30km north of Nanawa, the Paraguayans carried out a very local and limited offensive in order to correct unfavourable lines. The Paraguayans surrounded Bolivian troops, who managed to escape and later recovered their abandoned positions. The Paraguayans showed that they were already growing tired of the defensive war and were also unprepared in terms of war matériel.

The Battle of Pampa Grande: Three battles in one.

The Bolivian offensive that had begun with remarkable impetus in January had stopped completely by August. Without considering the return to Alihuatá, abandoned by the Paraguayans, Kundt did not reap a single victory in the actions he designed within a war of positions for which – paradoxically – the Paraguayans were not prepared given the restless character of their soldiers. Estigarribia patiently waited for the decision he made earlier in the year when he retreated to a better position to defend it, securing Arce for its water supply, and Toledo to the north and Nanawa to the south as ends of the Paraguayan line. In September, he requested authorisation from Paraguayan President Dr Eusebio Ayala to go on the offensive, understanding that the conditions of the theatre of operations had changed completely. He



From left to right, Paraguayan infantry Captain Ramón L. Paredes, a medical assistant private, Major Dr Silvio Lofruscio, Lieutenant Colonel Rafael Franco and an unidentified officer, at the first aid post at Fort Gondra. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)

decided, therefore, to launch a triple simultaneous operation with reinforcements brought from Asunción.

As a matter of logistics, Kundt had chosen not to deploy the



A Bolivian Army 6-ton Vickers Type A tank. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

Bolivian Army with more than 15,000 men in the region because of the long distances that supplies for his soldiers had to travel from the highlands, a problem that the Paraguayans did not have due to the closeness of their bases on the Paraguay River. Estigarribia planned the Paraguayan offensive in two phases; the first would be to get the Bolivians to narrow or modify their lines, since an envelopment manoeuvre in the Chaco – as Estigarribia learned in Algeria during his years of French military training – needed one (or two) wide radii of rotation, for which many troops were needed, troops that he did not yet have. Once the Bolivian lines were shortened, he would pass to the second phase, using fresh troops that were being prepared in the hinterland.

For the first phase, and given that the Bolivian line from Toledo to Nanawa was discontinuous, he proposed three battles at the same time, using the same scheme, the involvement of points determined by interior lines. Thus it was decided to attack Pampa Grande (in Bolivia it was known as Campo Grande), Pozo Favorito and the point 14km along the Alihuatá–Arce road. The three operations would have the same feature that Estigarribia would always impose on his operations and that would make him famous in this war, a copy of Hannibal's victory over Rome at the Battle of Cannae in 216 BC, a single or double '*corralito*' (encirclement).

Kundt ignored warnings from his subordinates regarding the situation in which the Bolivian Army was after the failed offensive. Instead, he planned another new operation in the centre of the general deployment from a dangerous position that his line had, like a wedge, inside the Paraguayan lines at Campo Aceval, also called Rancho 8. However, Estigarribia was ahead of him.

Because of its size, the action at Pampa Grande – west of the Alihuatá–Arce road – was presented as the most important of the three battles. It was also expected that the discontinuous Bolivian line would thus break and shorten. Estigarribia entrusted that mission to Lieutenant Colonel José A. Ortiz of the 7th Division, with the 5th, 9th and 14th Infantry Regiments. For the operation at Pozo Favorito, east of the road, Estigarribia chose the 8th Division, while for the final manoeuvre, he led in person the troops of the 12th Infantry Regiment '*Rubio Níu*' deployed on that road.

Kundt made another mistake by taking troops from the southern wing of his line (from the Gondra front) in order to deploy them at Alihuatá, hoping that the Paraguayans would attack there. These troops belonged to the 4th Infantry Regiment '*Loa*', led by Lieutenant Colonel Capriles, and were sent as reinforcements to Pampa Grande, where the 2nd Cavalry Regiment '*Ballivian*' of Lieutenant Colonel Rafael Gonzalez Quintanilla was stationed. Two Bolivian regiments defended Pampa Grande with about 650 men. To envelop them, Estigarribia had the 7th Division (under Ortiz) with three regiments and about 2,650 men, which started the manoeuvre on the 10th.

The 5th Infantry Regiment tied down a Bolivian outpost, led by Major Pantoja, while the 9th and 14th Infantry Regiments began the southward encirclement, leaving behind the troops of the 2nd Cavalry and 4th Infantry Regiments. Pantoja soon gave ground and retreated with only 14 men, the other 60 or so being killed or captured by the Paraguayans.

At the head of the Paraguayan regiments taking part in the encirclement was the legendary Lieutenant Colonel Eugenio

Alejandro Garay, alias '*Avión Pytá*' ('red airplane'), the oldest active commander in the Paraguayan Army. He gained his nickname when his fair skin became sunburnt as he led a column 50km on foot to capture a water well, his troops creating the legend that he had 'flown' rather than walked there.

On 11 September, the Paraguayan 9th Infantry Regiment, led by Major Casal, and 14th Infantry Regiment, under Major Ferreira, after building a road through the forest on the western side of the Bolivian positions, clashed with enemy patrols in the Bolivian rearguard and cut their supply lines. At the same time, 5km to the east, a battalion of the Paraguayan 12th Infantry Regiment performed a similar action on the Alihuatá–Arce road, encircling the 27th Infantry Regiment '*Chacaltaya*' and cutting the road.

On the 13th, the Bolivians tried to help their surrounded troops in Pampa Grande with elements of the 41st Infantry Regiment '*Colorados*' in the south and 8th Infantry Regiment, under Ribert, in the west, without great success. Kundt himself showed up to observe the action, but all he saw was his troops removing the body of Captain Julio Zambrana Bayá, killed by a bullet in the neck during an attempt to break the Paraguayan siege.

On 16 September, the Bolivians decided to withdraw the troops of the 27th Infantry Regiment by opening a path in the forest to the west of their positions, which took them back to Alihuatá without major losses. The Bolivians did not have the same luck at Pampa Grande, since all attempts to break the Paraguayan siege, led by Capriles and Gonzalez Quintanilla, failed. In the absence of water for their troops, and after five days of fighting without being supplied, they capitulated to Lieutenant Colonel Garay, who boldly appeared alone at the command post of the Bolivians to invite them to surrender.

In Pozo Favorito, in an operation similar to that at Pampa Grande, the Paraguayans captured part of the Bolivian 18th Infantry Regiment. The actions of this triple battle culminated on 16 September with about 1,000 Bolivian prisoners in Paraguayan hands.

The events at Pampa Grande were unique in this war, since practically all the besieged Bolivians were taken prisoner and no escapes were recorded. The action managed to break the Bolivian line, which was quickly moved far to the south. This allowed Estigarribia to consider the possibility of the second phase, a great movement to the west of the Bolivian lines, which would be attempted during October and would lead to the most spectacular Paraguayan victory of the war, that of Campo Vía.

5 THE BATTLE OF ALIHUATÁ–CAMPO VÍA

The second phase of the Paraguayan offensive began in September 1933 with the Battles of Pampa Grande and Pozo Favorito, General Estigarribia reducing the Bolivian front to make it easier to concentrate troops there, although it was still some 70km long.

Estigarribia, faithful to his philosophy of 'destroying the enemy and not conquering the land', collected matériel and men, strengthened two Army Corps at the expense of the third, brought the Asunción police and *macheteros* (Plácido Jara's irregular troops) from the Pilcomayo and even asked the Paraguayan Air Arm for 'the last cart that can fly'. He fortified where the Bolivians were stronger, then

attacked where they least expected it, and in a week he achieved the greatest Paraguayan triumph in the Chaco War, with the capture of 7,500 Bolivians. The Battle of Alihuatá, also called the Battle of the 50 Days, brought about the best conditions for the Paraguayan Army to bring the war to a satisfactory conclusion.

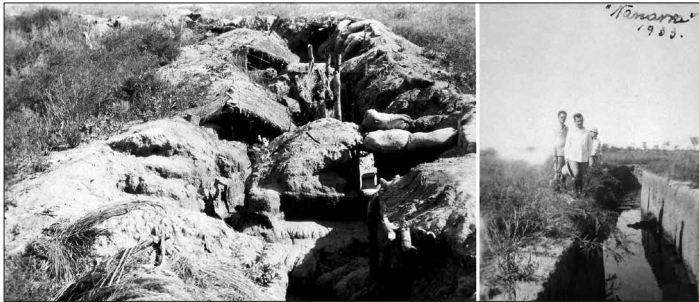
The Paraguayan numerical superiority, which was key for the coverage of such an extensive front – some 70km long – was used in frontal clashes that began on 23 October but continued uninterrupted during November at Puesto J, Campo Aceval, Nanawa, Pirizal, Gondra and other locations. Then in December and until the final



The Bolivian Army 6-ton Vickers Type B tank. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN).



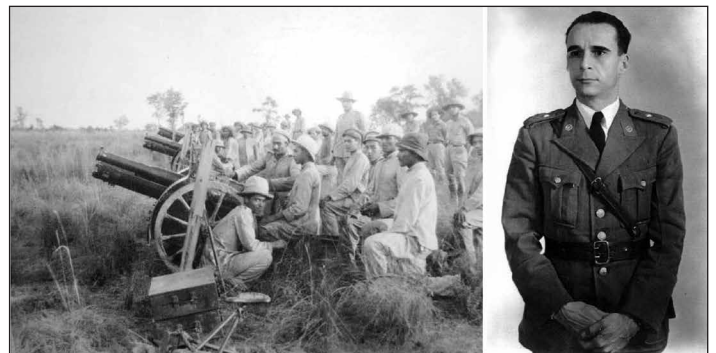
A Bolivian Army Carden Lloyd Mk.VIb tankette. (Bolivian Army Archives)



Paraguayan Army trench at Nanawa (left). Major Francisco Andino (centre) of the 13th Infantry Regiment 'Tuyuti' poses next to an anti-tank ditch at Nanawa (right). (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



Left, Bolivian soldiers with a Colt heavy machinegun. Right, a Bolivian soldier with a Madsen machinegun. (Bolivian Army Archives)



Left, a Paraguayan Army battery of 75mm Schneider guns at Nanawa. Right, Paraguayan Artillery Captain Juan Rovira. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)



Top, Paraguayan Army pharmacy at Fort Nanawa. Bottom, Paraguayan Army Medical Corps nurses at Nanawa. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



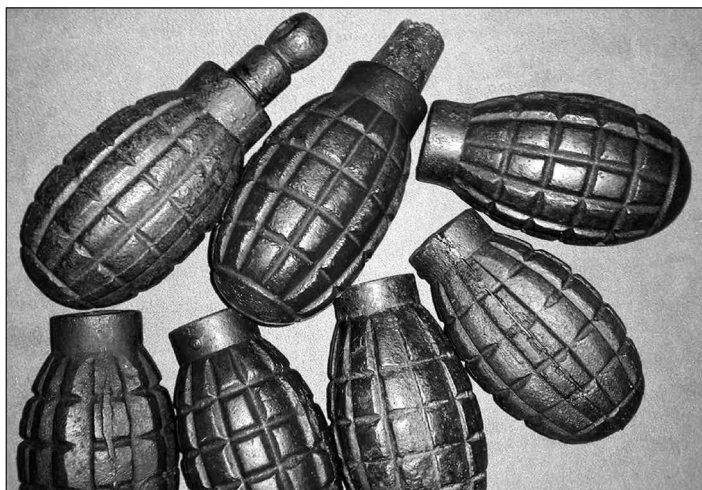
The remains of a Bolivian Vickers tank destroyed during the Battle of Nanawa. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

siege of Campo Vía, Paraguayan forces took part in encirclement manoeuvres, a strategy they would not abandon until the end of the war. The Bolivian inferiority in numbers was not decisive in the Paraguayan victory, since there were no clashes of magnitude where such a difference was noticeable.

The Paraguayan success began to take shape in the obstinate decision of General Kundt to defend all occupied territory, to such an extent that Fort Alihuatá, after the events at Pampa Grande, was almost encircled. Estigarribia only needed to carry out a simple plan, in that the Paraguayans gained quick access to the two most important roads that linked Alihuatá with Saavedra, which were the only routes available for Bolivian troops to withdraw along before being completely encircled. Both roads were neglected by Kundt, who just three days before the end of the battle sent a regiment to protect only one of them.



Two Paraguayan Army officers wearing the traditional Paraguayan wool poncho on a very cold morning in July 1933 (left). An elderly sergeant also wears a poncho and carries his wool blanket and Mauser rifle (right). (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



Paraguayan Army hand grenades, called 'Carumbe-í' (a Guaraní name meaning 'small turtle'), manufactured by the Navy Arsenal. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)



Wounded Bolivian POWs are transported on a Paraguayan Army truck to a nearby field hospital. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

It is striking that this battle, unlike the others to date, witnessed an evident lowering of morale among the Bolivian soldiers, who, although they successfully endured the initial Paraguayan push of 23 October, slowly lost confidence in their ability to resist. The Bolivian leadership

was aware of the problem of low morale caused by several defeats, so ordered neither offensive nor defensive actions in this sector. They knew in advance that the Paraguayan Army was to carry out an encirclement manoeuvre but did nothing to prevent it. The Bolivian employment of advanced positions only led to their pinning down by Paraguayan forces.

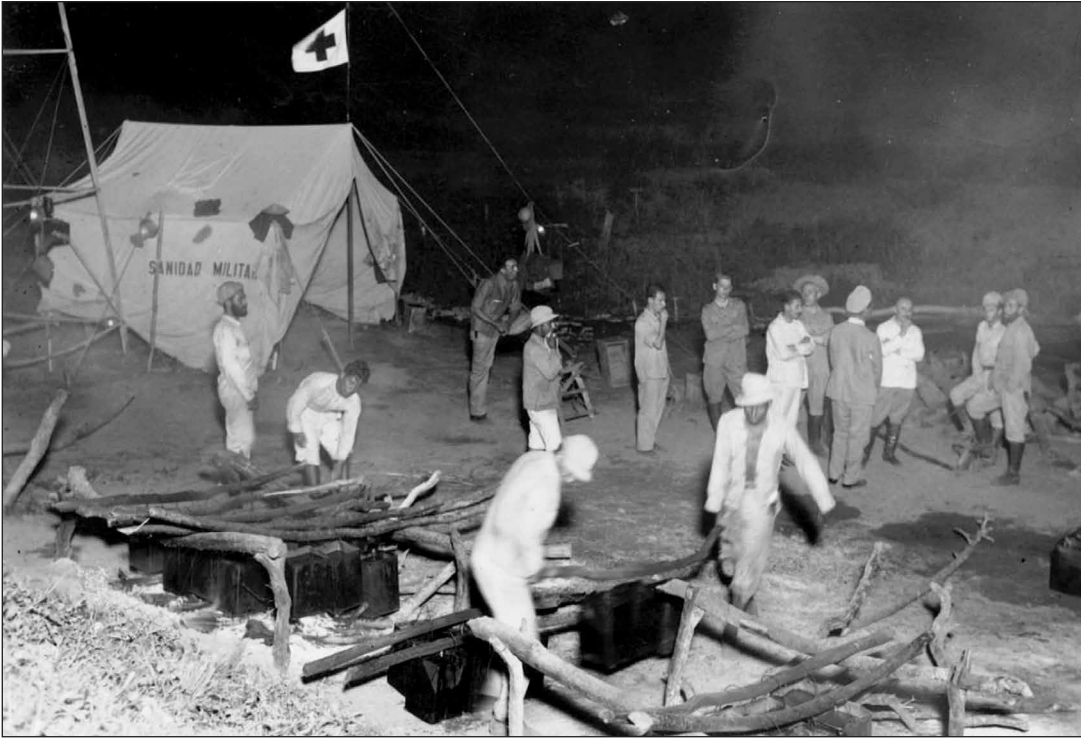
The only active front at that time was the line between Alihuatá and Nanawa, and the partial withdrawal of troops from the Paraguayan II Army Corps at Toledo was not correctly interpreted by Kundt. He should have known that

his three divisions could not face two well-positioned Paraguayan Army Corps with very high morale after their two recent consecutive victories at Pampa Grande and Pozo Favorito. Although the battle lasted in theory for 50 days, there were intervals on the Paraguayan side that considerably delayed the outcome; once in combat, the Paraguayans defeated the enemy in just eight days from 4 December, in a battle in which Bolivia never had the initiative.

Estigarribia, tired of waiting for the commander of I Army Corps, Colonel Juan B. 'Ugly' Ayala to prepare his troops, dismissed him and assumed personal direction of the unit. On 4 December, he gathered several commanders of the III Army Corps from the southern sector of the Paraguayan front and ordered them to prepare an attack in the Gondra sector, where the 1st Division of Lieutenant Colonel Franco was facing the 4th Bolivian Division led by Colonel Emilio Gonzalez Quintt. Once the movement was performed, Franco was to go swiftly to the west to seize the Alihuatá-Saavedra road. Estigarribia, having reserved for himself the command of the I Army Corps (on the northern sector of the Paraguayan front) arranged for the reinforced 7th Division of Lieutenant Colonel Ortiz to encircle Fort Alihuatá from the west, where the 9th Bolivian Division led by Colonel Carlos Banzer was deployed, and link with Franco's troops coming from the east. Thus, with a breakthrough from the east (Franco) and an encirclement from the west (Ortiz), the Paraguayan Army would completely surround the Bolivians. However, it remained to be seen which of the three available escape routes the Bolivians would try to use. This final part of the battle involved 20,000 Paraguayans trying to surround 10,000 Bolivians from the 9th and 4th Divisions.

On 5 December, around 11:00 a.m., Ortiz's 7th Division, encircling from the west through the forest, captured the first of three objectives, the Alihuatá-Pabón road, which was barely defended, and by the afternoon had already placed a strong patrol of the 14th Infantry Regiment 'Cerro Corá' on the Alihuatá-Saavedra road, the second objective, which was taken after a brief battle with the meagre Bolivian garrison stationed there. Before the day was over, Banzer had already lost the two most important roads to his positions, which were then in Paraguayan hands, although he had time to order the evacuation of the entire hospital at Alihuatá with his wounded personnel to Saavedra, only minutes before the Paraguayans took the second road 2km south of Alihuatá.

By 8:30 a.m. on the 6th, a whole battalion of the Paraguayan 14th Infantry Regiment met with its patrol and consolidated the capture



Clothing and sheets being disinfected at a Paraguayan Army first aid post. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)



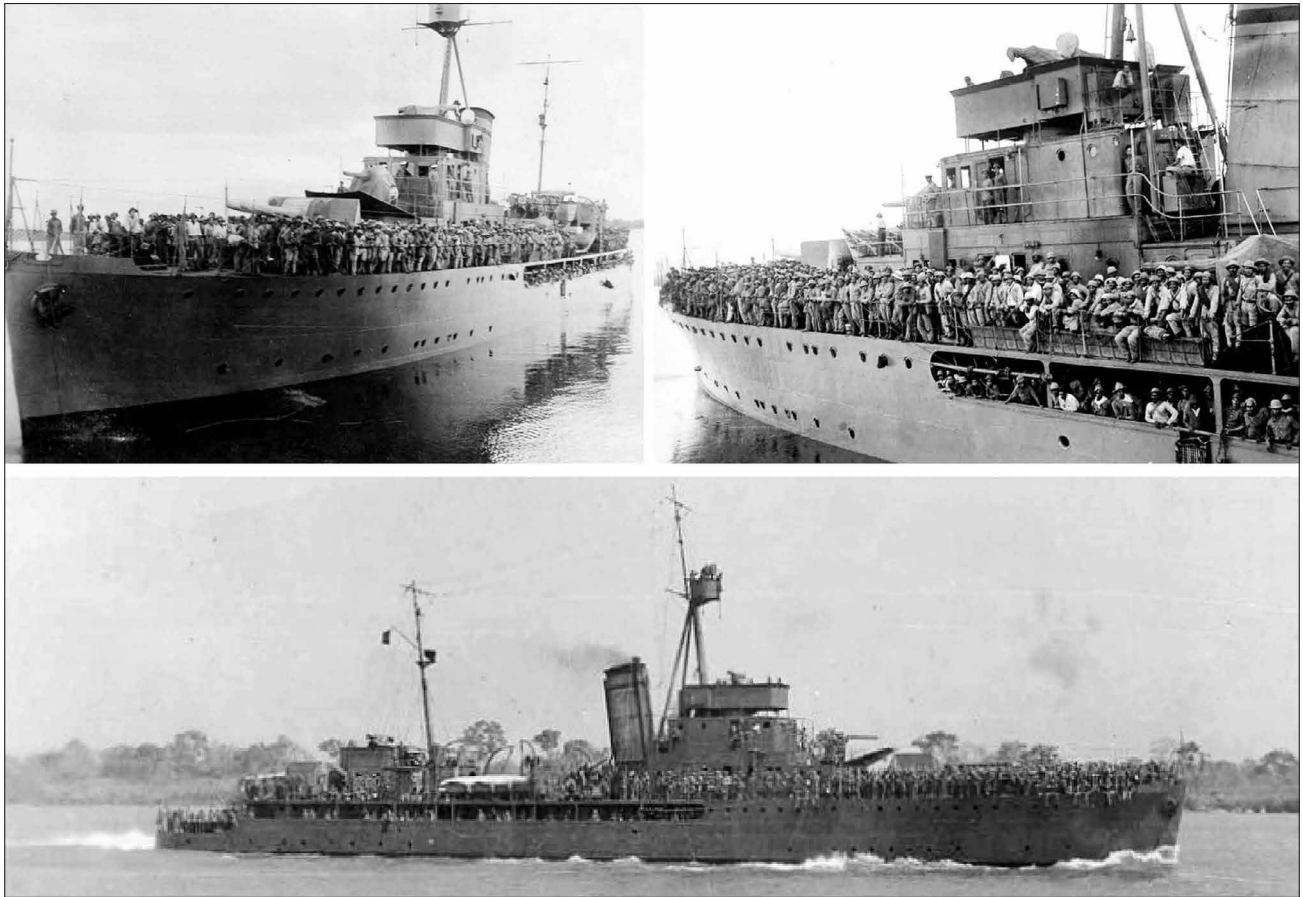
Left, a Bolivian Army 20mm Oerlikon SSG32 AA gun. Right, a Bolivian Vickers heavy machinegun used for AA fire (Bolivian Army Archives)



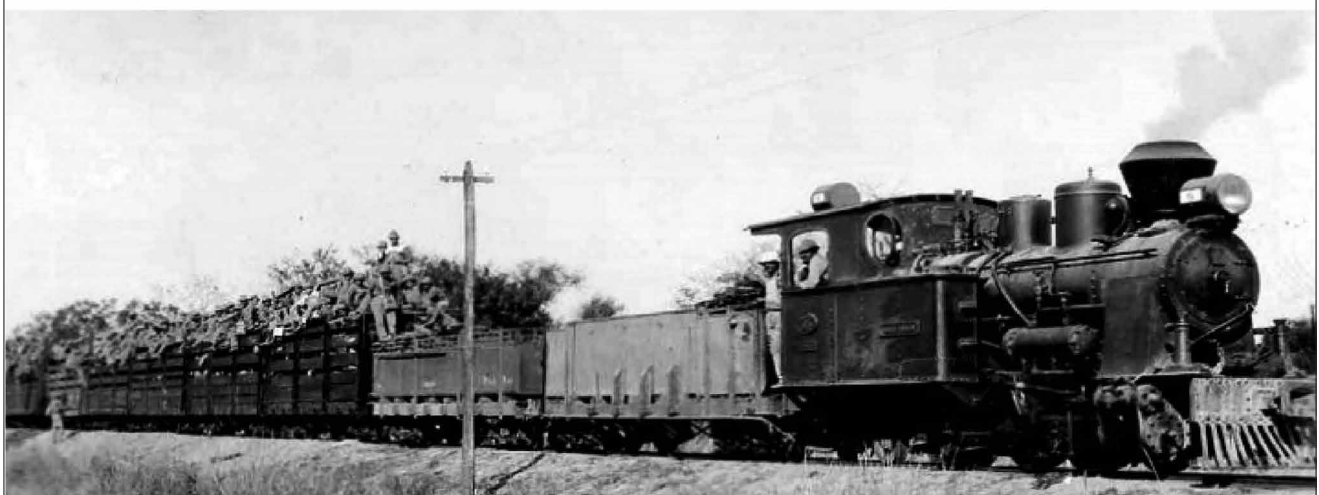
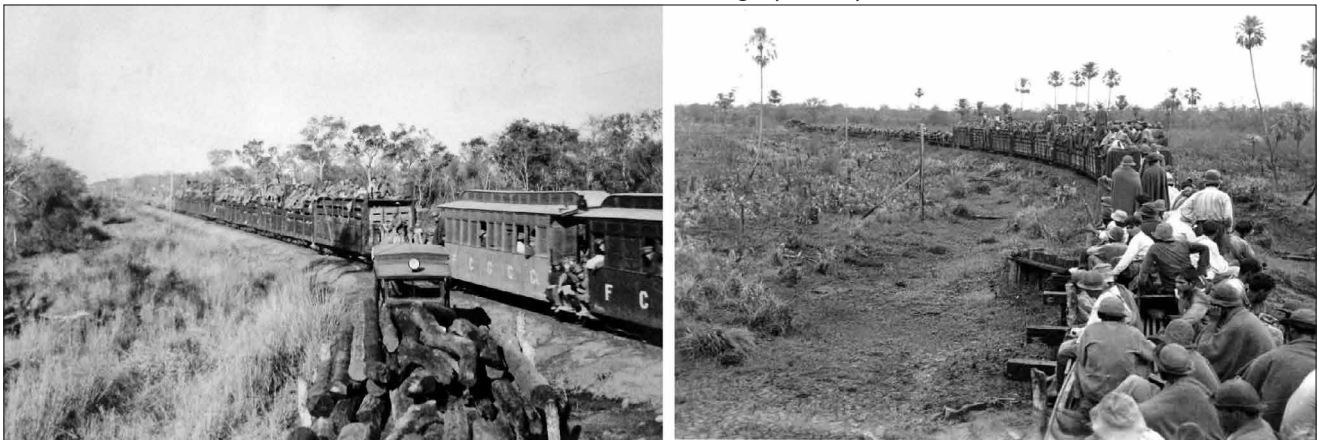
Two Bolivian Vickers tanks captured intact by the Paraguayan Army. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

of the Alihuatá–Saavedra road. Inexplicably, Banzer did not take any action to retake it. The cutting of this road produced immediate effects. All the Bolivian left wing retreated up to 2km, delivering Fort Charata to the Paraguayans. By 3:00 p.m., on the southern front, Lieutenant Colonel Franco was conveniently reinforced with two regiments to start the breakthrough in Gondra the following day. At 7:00 p.m., in total darkness before the appearance of the moon, about 800 men crawled through the open field to take positions between 40 and 100 metres from the Bolivian lines, that surprisingly had neither checkpoints nor any type of security measures. The Paraguayans tried not to sleep, so as not to emit any sound that would alert the Bolivians. Before 10 p.m., the sky was completely overcast, which helped hide the Paraguayans, and there was no full moon for the rest of the night. Estigarribia decided to personally direct the arm of the 7th Division that encircled the Bolivians in the west by organising the *Detachment Britos*, which received orders to take another section of the Alihuatá–Saavedra road, about 20km further south, in a second pincer movement and thereby link with Franco, who was coming from the east. The Paraguayan trap had been activated; it only remained for Franco and his 1st Division to break the Bolivian front at Gondra and head west to link with the *Britos*.

At 5 a.m. on 7 December, at the signal of a salvo of four guns, the battalions *Facetti*, *Villagra* and *Martinez* of the 4th Infantry Regiment, and the *Garcia* and *Ricardi* battalions of the 19th Infantry Regiment of the Paraguayan 1st Division, which had spent the whole night lying on the ground a few metres from the Bolivian line, rose up and assaulted the sleepy Bolivian troops of the 26th



Paraguayan troops being transported by the Paraguayan Navy gunboats *Paraguay* and *Humaitá* to Port Casado. (Paraguayan Navy Files)



Paraguayan troops being transported 145km on the Casado train from Port Casado to a station near the battlefield. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



Brigadier General José Félix Estigarribia, commander-in-chief of the Paraguayan Army, with his personal assistant Lieutenant Edmundo Tombeaur. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



Paraguayan Army Captain Mauricio Escobar (centre, with a cap in his hand) and officers of the 5th Infantry Regiment 'Gral. Díaz' during the Battle of Pampa Grande. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)

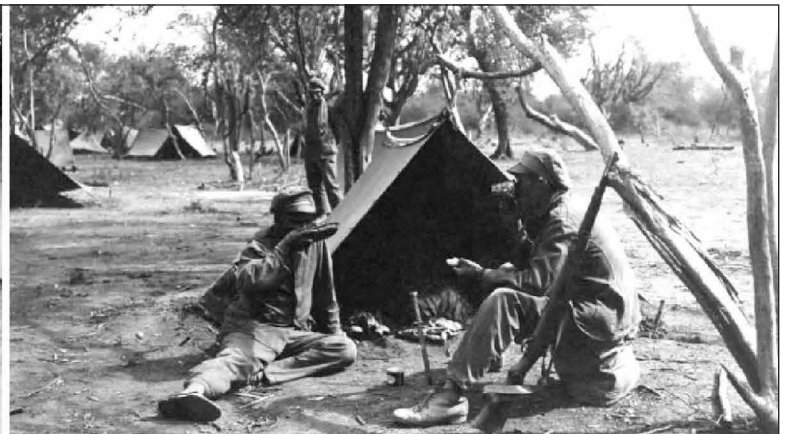
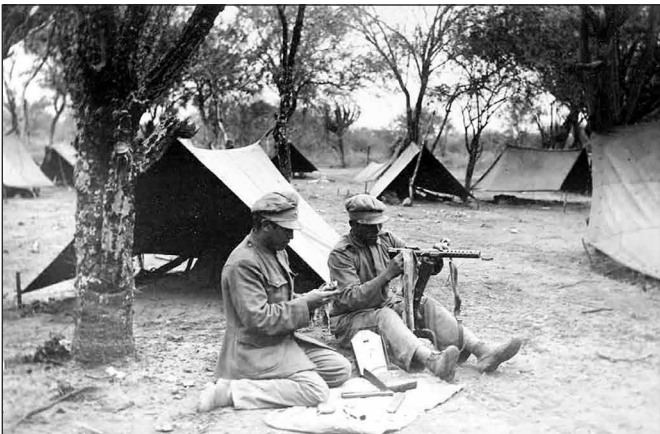
Infantry Regiment 'Charcas', led by Lieutenant Colonel Pareja, and the 41st Infantry Regiment 'Colorados' of the *Detachment Vidaurre*. The breakthrough in Gondra was complete all along the 2.5km front. The Bolivian 4th Division fielded some 510 men in the 26th Infantry Regiment, reinforced with 120 reservists of the Salazar Company. The number of Paraguayan attackers was a minimum of 700 in four battalions in the first wave, followed by another eight battalions of some 1,500 men, creating a ratio of four Paraguayan attackers to every Bolivian defender.



Lieutenant Colonel Eugenio Alejandrino Garay Argaña (right), next to Colonel José Antonio Ortiz, commander of the Paraguayan 7th Division at Pampa Grande. (Maria Eugenia Garay)

Colonel Banzer, commander of the Bolivian 9th Division, informed General Kundt that the Alihuatá–Pozo Negro road had been occupied by the Paraguayans and requested permission to save his division by retreating to Saavedra along the only way left open to him, by way of Pozo Encanto, Esperanza and Urey. The problem was that on that road, González Quintt with his 4th Division was being assaulted by the Paraguayan 1st Division in Gondra. Kundt, without informing Banzer that the 4th Division had been eliminated by the Paraguayans, agreed to the withdrawal. Banzer thus fell straight into the Paraguayan trap, abandoning the Alihuatá fortress – his base of operations – and withdrawing in an initially orderly manner. However, once they entered the *Picada de la Salvación* (the 'Salvation trail'), a narrow 25km-long road, the lengthy Bolivian column, composed of trucks and brand new cannons, became stuck as the rains turned the track into deep mud.

At dawn on the 8th, the bulk of the 9th Division was at Urey, and Banzer informed Gonzalez Quintt that he would retreat through the Capriles Trail, a narrow path that started in the *Picada de la Salvación* before heading southwest to end in the *Picada Velilla*, that was still



Left, Bolivian soldiers cleaning their weapons. Right, Bolivian privates eating in their camp. (Bolivian Army Archives)



Left, Bolivian POWs working in the Chaco. Right, two Bolivian Army officers, Lieutenant Colonel Gonzalez Quint and Major Cardenas, at the Military School in Asunción. They were captured at Pampa Grande. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



General Estigarribia and his Chief of Staff at Fort Isla Po'i. Second row, left to right, Lieutenant Talavera, Lieutenant Tombeur, Captain Pastore, Captain Villagra, Major Chavez and Major Gimenez. First row, Lieutenant Colonel Rolon, General Estigarribia, Colonel Manuel Garay and Lieutenant Colonel Pedro Laran. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

in Bolivian hands. Franco's Paraguayan troops, once the front was broken at Gondra, moved west in two parallel columns, one via the *Picada Velilla* and the other by the forest to the north of the trail. The Bolivian 4th Division troops that retreated after the assault on the 7th headed north on the *Picada de la Salvación* and met the first soldiers of the 9th Division coming in the opposite direction, producing a logjam of some 8,000 men on the narrow path that was barely navigable by truck. Banzer was informed that the *Picada Capriles* was not finished yet, so the crowding of men and matériel only increased.

After midnight on 9 December, the *Detachment Britos* column was dangerously close to the Alihuatá-Saavedra



A Paraguayan Army column with mountain guns on mules. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden)



A Paraguayan Army 81mm Stokes Brandt mortar with its crew in a trench. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

road. Kundt sent two groups of reinforcements from Saavedra, under Lieutenant Colonel Frias and the commander of the Bolivian I Army Corps, Colonel Peñaranda, to help the troops of Banzer and Gonzalez Quintt. Frías managed to enter the *Picada Velilla*, but Peñaranda, who was behind, received reports that an advanced Paraguayan patrol of the 1st Division had left the road to Saavedra a little further down. Without waiting for more information, Peñaranda destroyed his medical supplies, trucks and other equipment that he had brought and returned to Saavedra through the forest, avoiding the road and saving himself from being taken prisoner by *Detachment Britos*, which

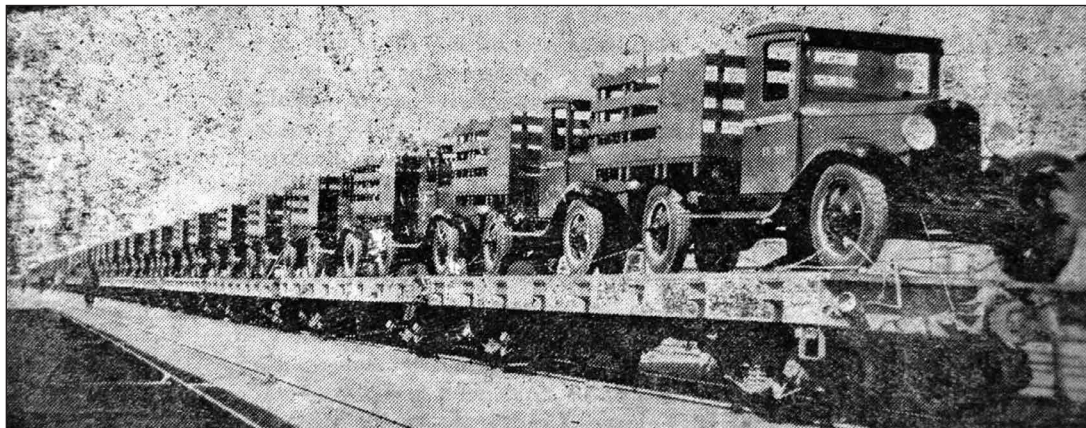
arrived there a few hours later. The *Britos* stopped a few metres before leaving the road to avoid betraying its presence. At 11 p.m., they observed two Bolivian tanks being towed past them from Alihuatá, which stopped for the night about 1km south of them.

Before dawn on the 10th, a regiment of the *Britos* moved to the north of the road, while others entered the *Picada Velilla* to link up with the troops of the 1st Division and the 7th Cavalry Regiment '*San Martín*' went south to stop any Bolivian attack from Saavedra. Men from the *Britos* soon captured the two Bolivian tanks, whose crews were caught having breakfast. The first regiments of the Bolivian 9th Division entered the *Picada Capriles* in a vain attempt to reach the *Picada Velilla*. Other regiments descended by the *Picada de la desesperación* (the 'Trail of despair'). At night, units of the Bolivian 2nd, 20th and 34th Regiments managed to reach the *Picada Velilla*, crossing the forest before the Paraguayans linked up their forces. Paraguayan troops of the 4th Regiment of the 1st Division began to be deployed in the hills to the north of the *Picada Velilla* to face any Bolivians who tried to leave the encirclement that was being set. The attempted breakout started at 4 p.m. with the '*Lanza*' Regiment, which lost many men as they temporarily broke the Paraguayan line before becoming isolated between the first Paraguayan line and the second one some 200 metres behind. Nevertheless, some 300 men of the '*Lanza*' Regiment took advantage of the disruption in the 4th Infantry Regiment's line to evade capture and head south to Saavedra.

The 11th dawned with the Paraguayans managing to link up all their troops, including *Detachment Britos*, which connected with the 1st Division, thereby tightening the encirclement of the Bolivians. The Bolivians fought in vain throughout the morning, suffering many



A Paraguayan Army platoon honouring the flag at Fort Zenteno. (Instituto de History y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



A large number of Bolivian Army Chevrolet trucks at Uyuni train station, in transit to the battlefield. (Diario La Razon)



Brand new Paraguayan Army International trucks arriving in the battlefield. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden)

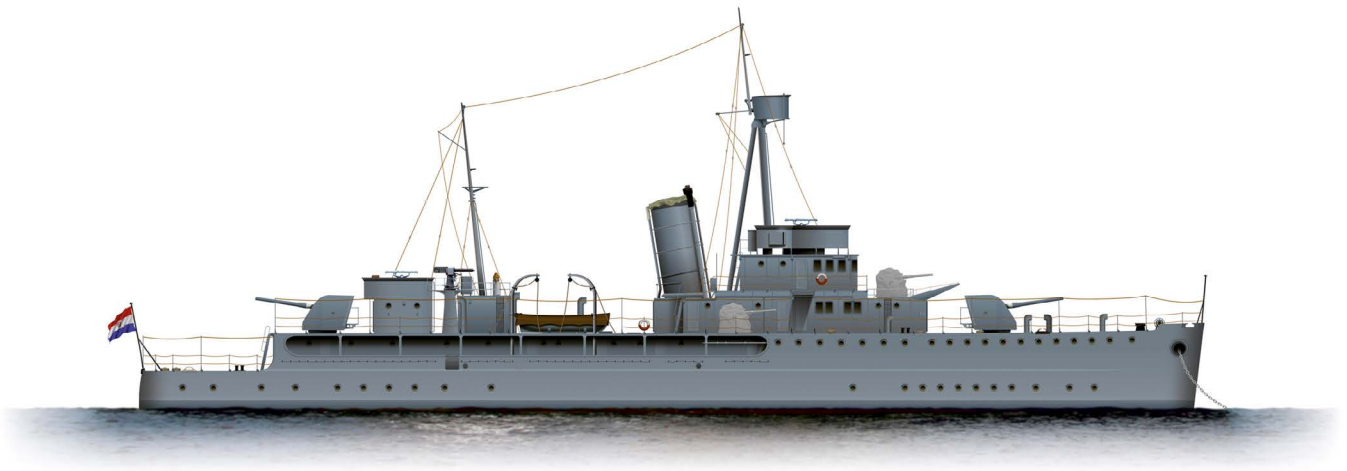
losses as they attempt to break the encirclement. By midday, and after a complicated parley to negotiate the total surrender of the troops, Banzer and Gonzalez Quintt signed a surrender document under which some 7,500 Bolivian troops became prisoners of war.

The war booty that fell into Paraguayan hands was immense, consisting of 90 trucks, 8,000 rifles and more than 1,000 automatic guns, but in return they suffered heavy losses, which amounted to 1,000 dead, 3,000 injured and 8,000 sick in the period from October–December 1933.

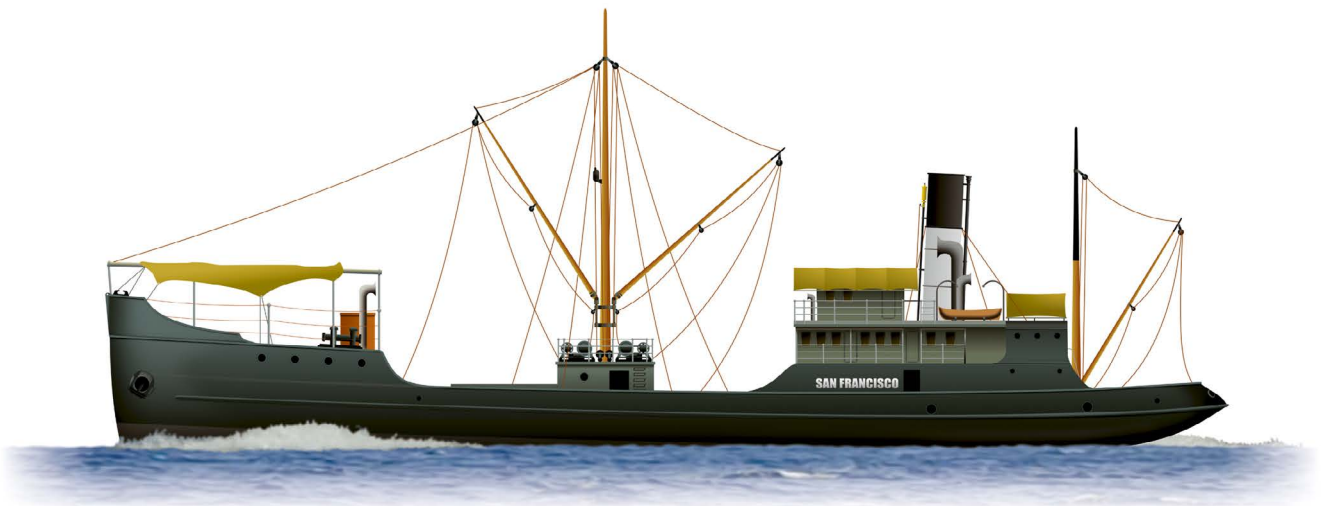
After the debacle at Campo Via, the Bolivian government tried to replace General Kundt with General José L. Lanza, but, pressed by Colonel José D. Toro, Colonel Peñaranda was promoted instead, in recognition of his escape from the Paraguayan encirclement. To avoid the threat of a military coup, the representatives of Bolivian President Daniel Salamanca who came to the Chaco to replace Kundt gave up their original plan, initiating a period of misunderstanding between the civil and military power that would lead to Bolivia's final defeat in the war.



Left, a Paraguayan Army patrol with Mauser rifles in the forest in the Campo Via sector. Right, Paraguayan soldiers with a Vollmer VMP (left) and a captured Bergman MP-28 (right) submachinegun. Note the leather over-pants used as protection against the large thorns in the forest. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)



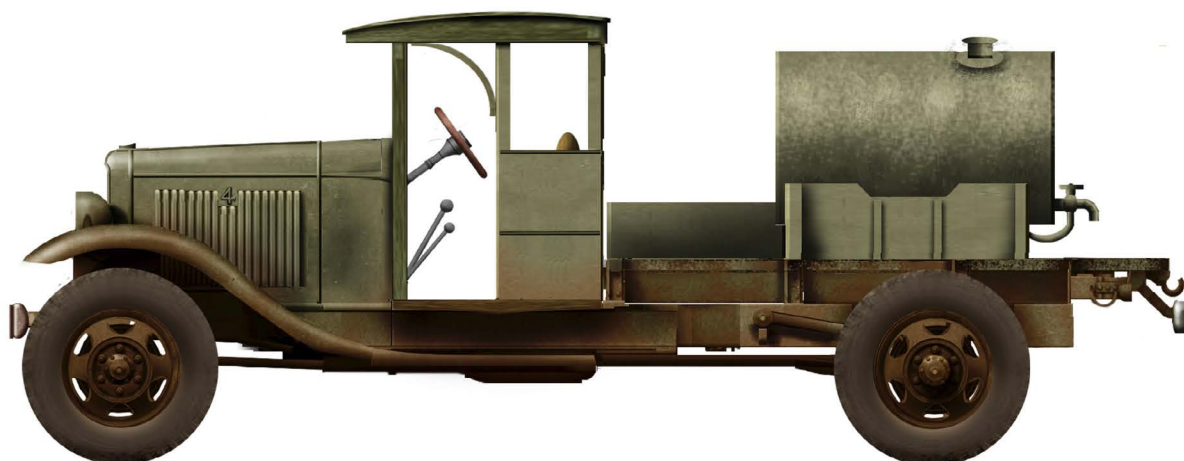
Cañonero (gunboat) *Paraguay*, one of the twin gunboats (the other being the *Humaitá*) ordered by the Paraguayan Government in 1929 from the Odero-Terni Shipyard at Genoa, Italy. It had four 120mm L/50 twin Odero-Terni guns, three 76mm L/50 single Odero-Terni guns, two 40mm L/39 single AA guns, racks for six Vickers “H” Mk.II mines and six HMGs. It was mainly used for troop transport and river patrol. Fully loaded, it could transport a battalion of infantry. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



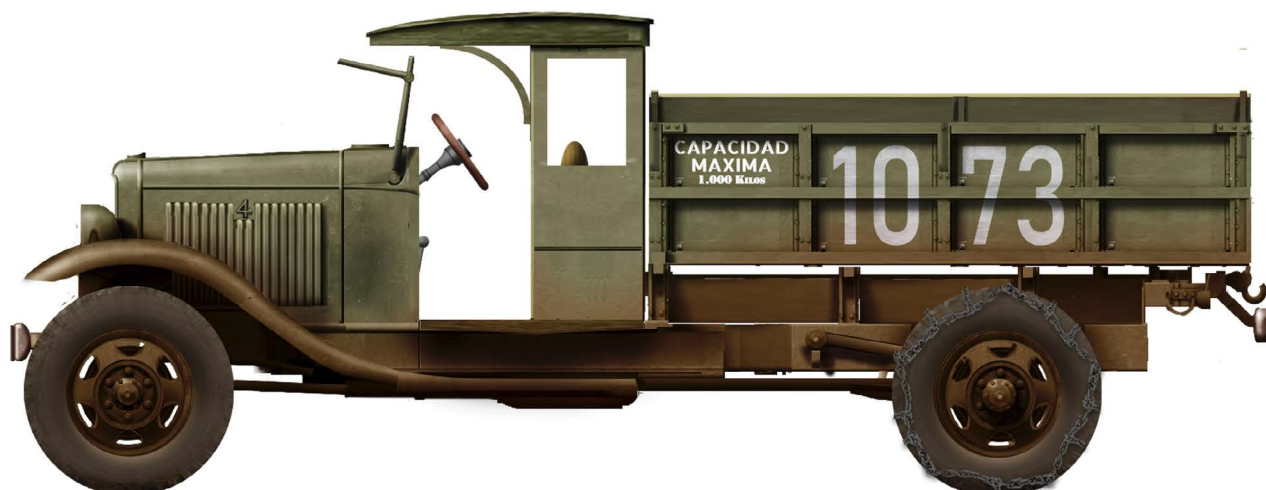
Vapor (river steamer) *San Francisco*, a 399 ton-cargo ship, which was armed with just a single 7mm machinegun. It was mainly used to transport troops and freight for the Paraguayan Army during the war. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



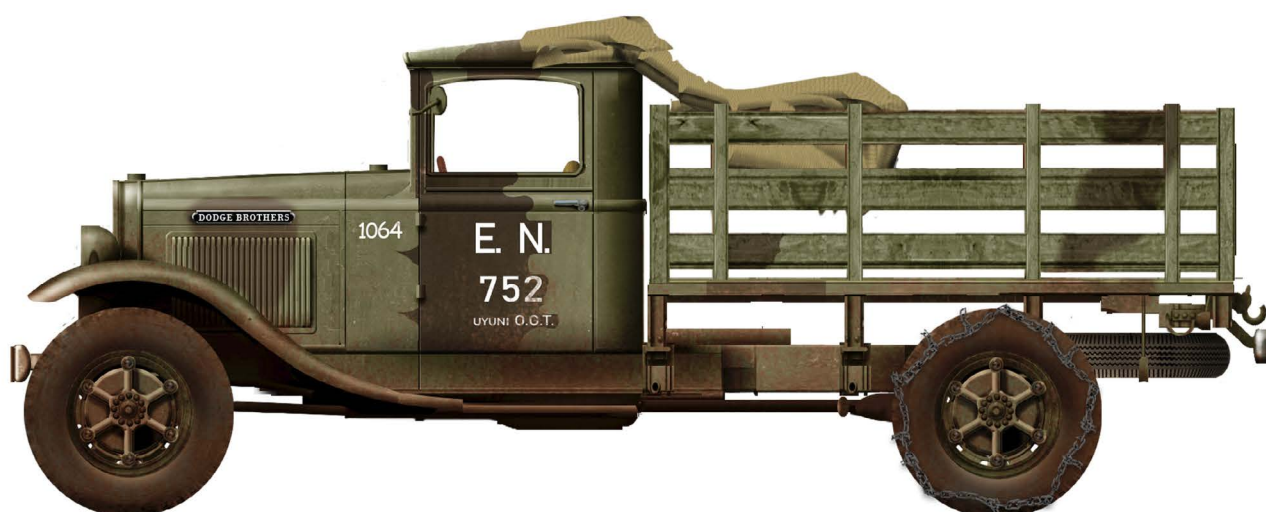
Carden-Loyd MkVI tankette, a pair of which were acquired by the Bolivian Army in 1931. They proved to be ill-suited for the bushy environment of the Chaco. It was armed with a .303 Vickers MG with 1,000 rounds. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



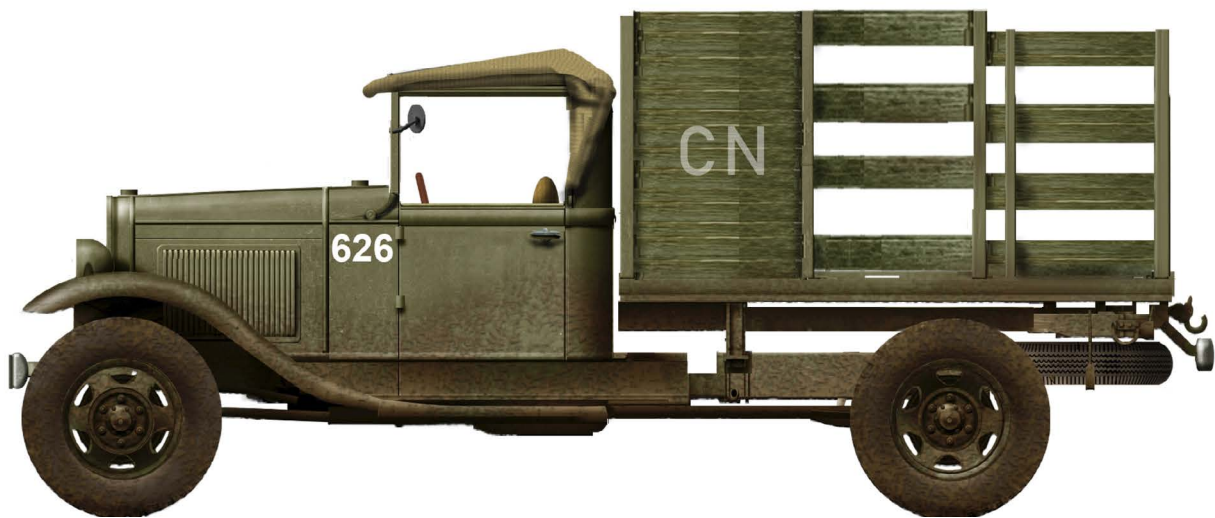
Paraguayan Army Chevy Truck Cistern, a modified Chevrolet 1.5 ton truck, model 1931, carrying a metal water tank made in the Navy Arsenal. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



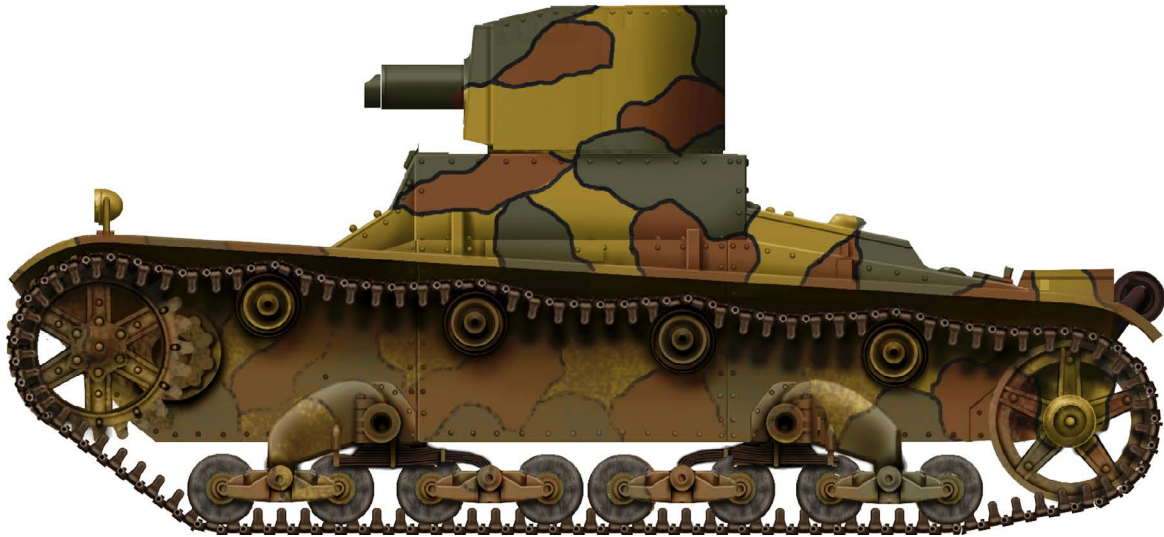
Paraguayan Army Chevrolet 1.5 ton Truck, model 1931. The Paraguayan Government purchased a total of 853 Chevy trucks without bodies and cabins, which were built with wood in the Navy Arsenal. Besides the Chevy trucks, the Paraguayan Army also had 992 Ford BB 1.5 ton and 207 International 1.5 ton trucks (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



Bolivian Army Dodge truck with a metal cabin and wooden body. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



Bolivian Army Ford truck with a metal cabin and wooden body. Besides Dodge and Ford trucks, the Bolivian Army also had International Harvester C-1 and Willys Whippet trucks. In the three years of war, the Bolivian Army purchased nearly 2,500 trucks of all the mentioned brands. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



Bolivian Army Vickers 6 ton Type A tank. Just one Type A was purchased and it was used in the Second Battle of Nanawa in July 1933. It was captured intact by the Paraguayan Army during the Battle of Campo Vía six months later. After the war, it was placed as a monument in one central square in Asunción until the mid-1990s when it was returned to Bolivia. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



Bolivian Army Vickers 6 ton Type B tank. Two Type Bs were purchased and they were used in the Second Battle of Nanawa in July 1933. One of them was destroyed in that battle and the other one was captured intact during the Battle of Campo Vía. After the war, it was sold to the Republicans during the Spanish Civil War. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



The Paraguayan infantry clothing during the Chaco War was quite appropriate for the region. This sergeant is shown wearing a simple uniform and a hat, all in dark olive green fabric. The use of insignia was uncommon and his NCO status was demonstrated by his personal weapon, in this case a Smith & Wesson pistol, carried in an Old West-style belt. He is holding a regulation-issue Mauser rifle. The rest of his equipment comprised of a simple cloth pouch, a blanket, a canteen and the indispensable machete, known by the Paraguayans as 'yatagán'. Quite useful were the 'guardamontes': large pieces of cowhide worn on the legs as protection against the prickly local vegetation, including huge thorns. (Artwork by Anderson Subtil)



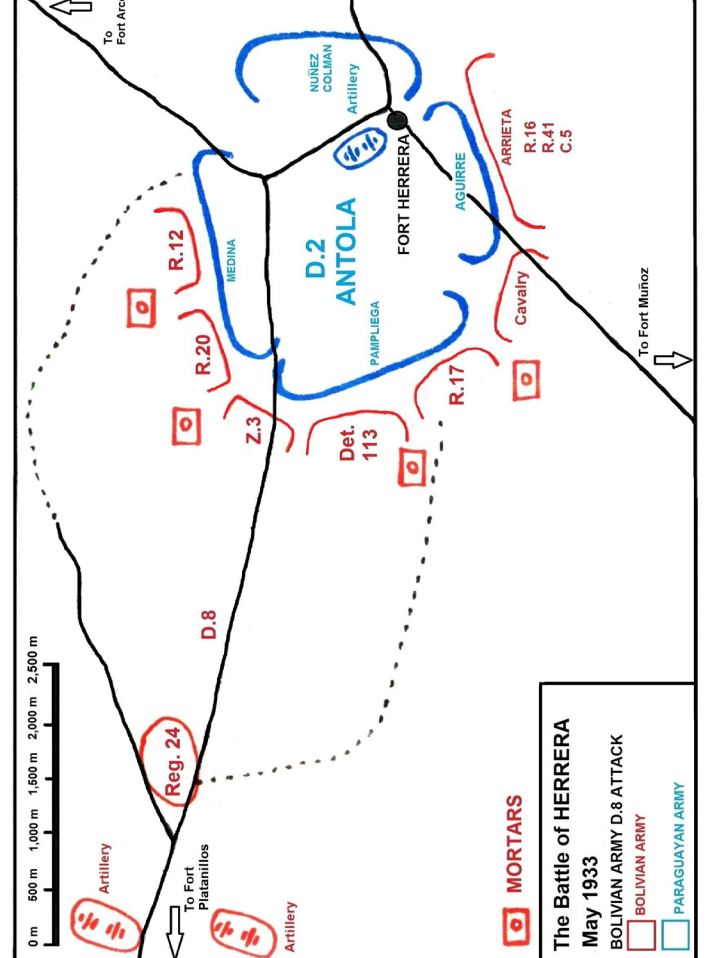
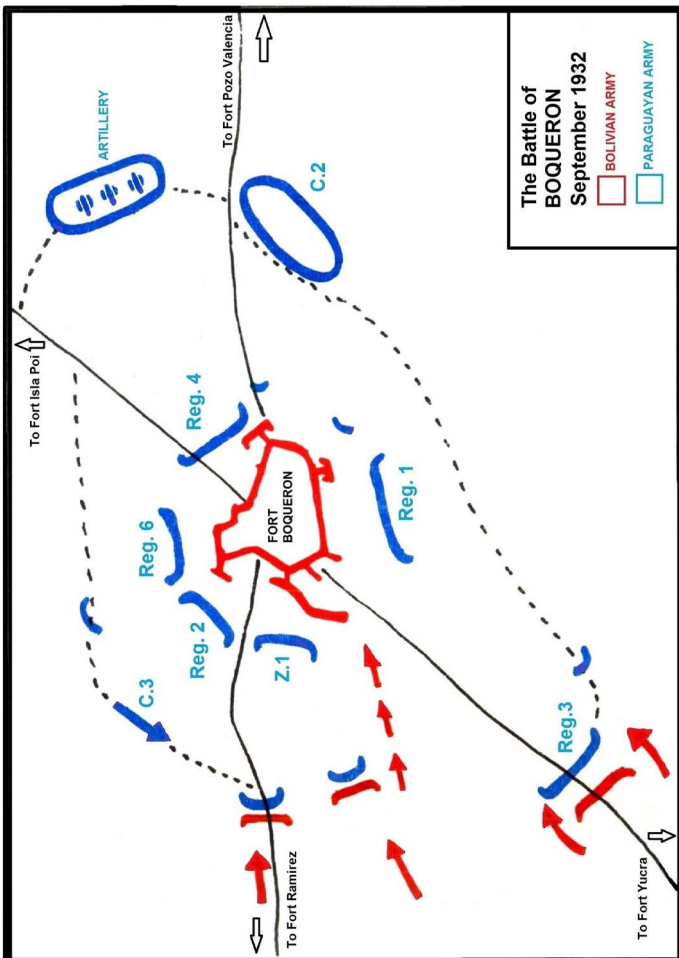
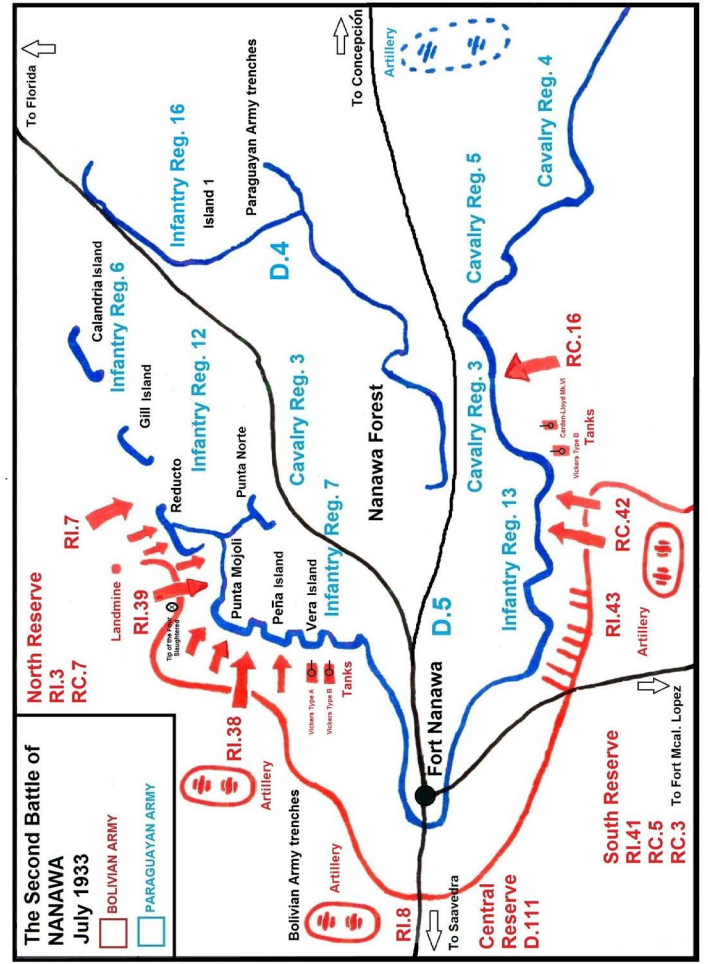
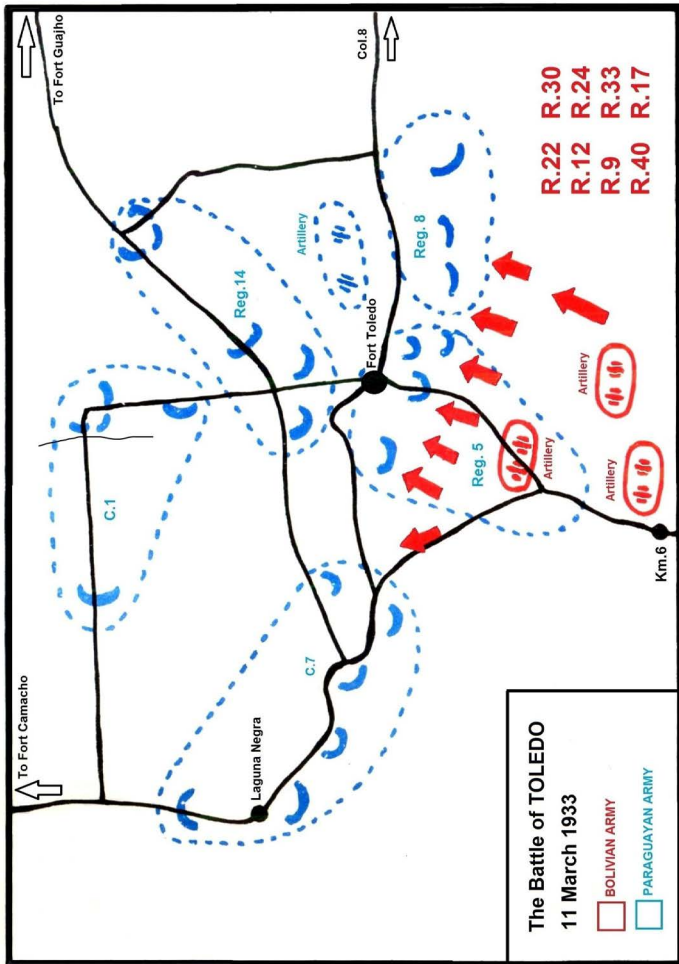
The attire of this young Paraguayan officer shows the widespread influence of the Argentinean and French military missions that passed through the country in the mid-1920s and early 1930s. During the war, officers either wore the illustrated cap or salakot helmet. Paraguayan officers rarely wore their rank insignia, and were usually distinguished by their use of personal weapons, high boots, and field caps. The inset shows the "Cruz del Chaco" (Chaco Cross) Medal, the Paraguayan Army's highest decoration. (Artwork by Anderson Subtil)

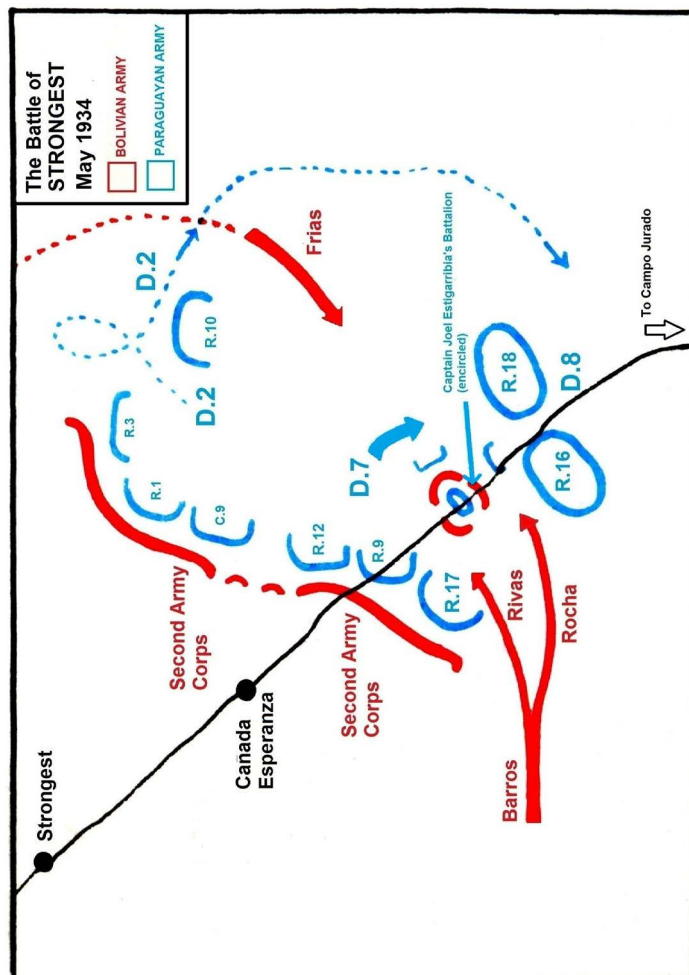
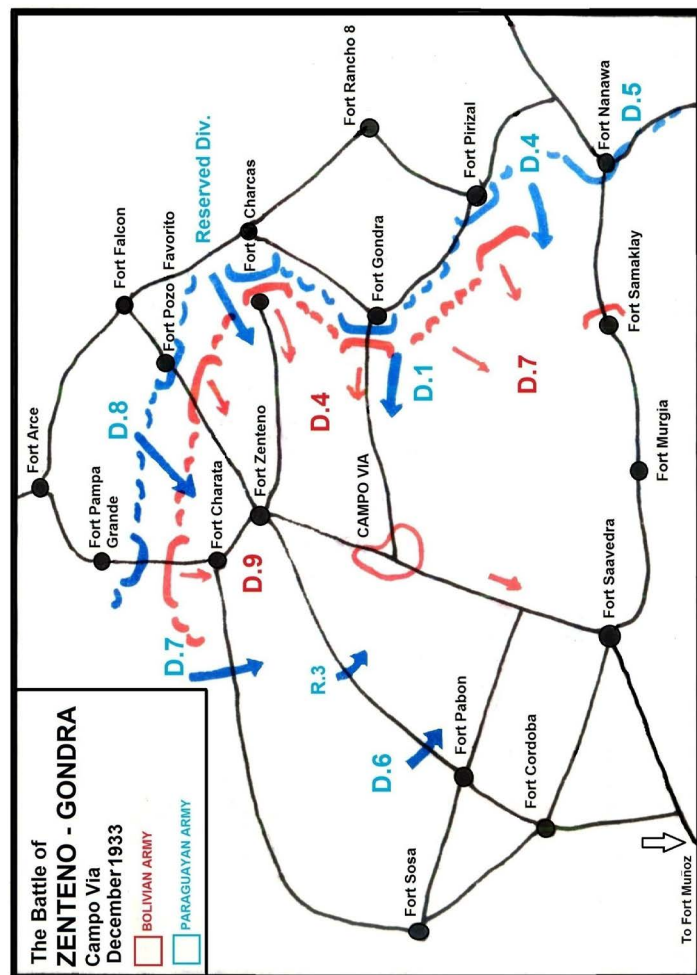


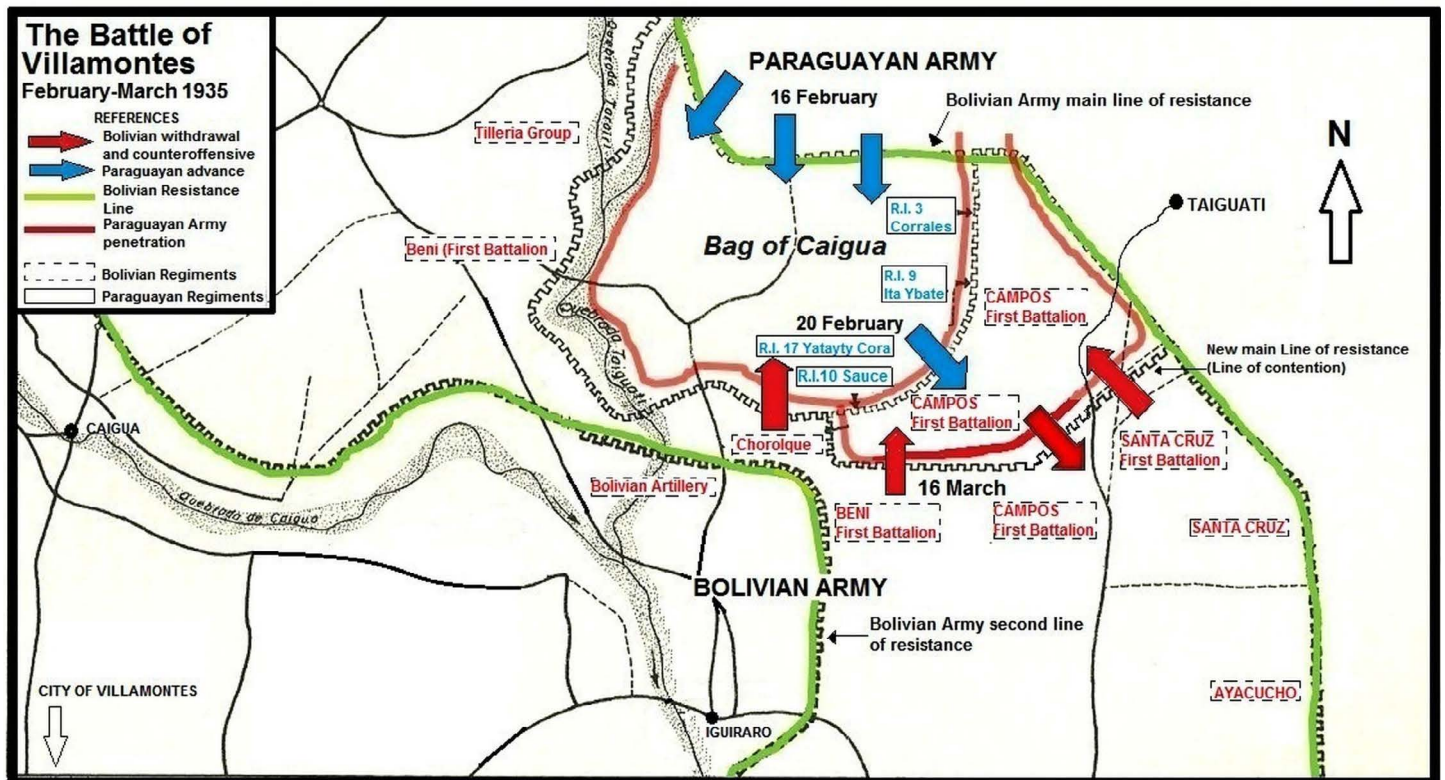
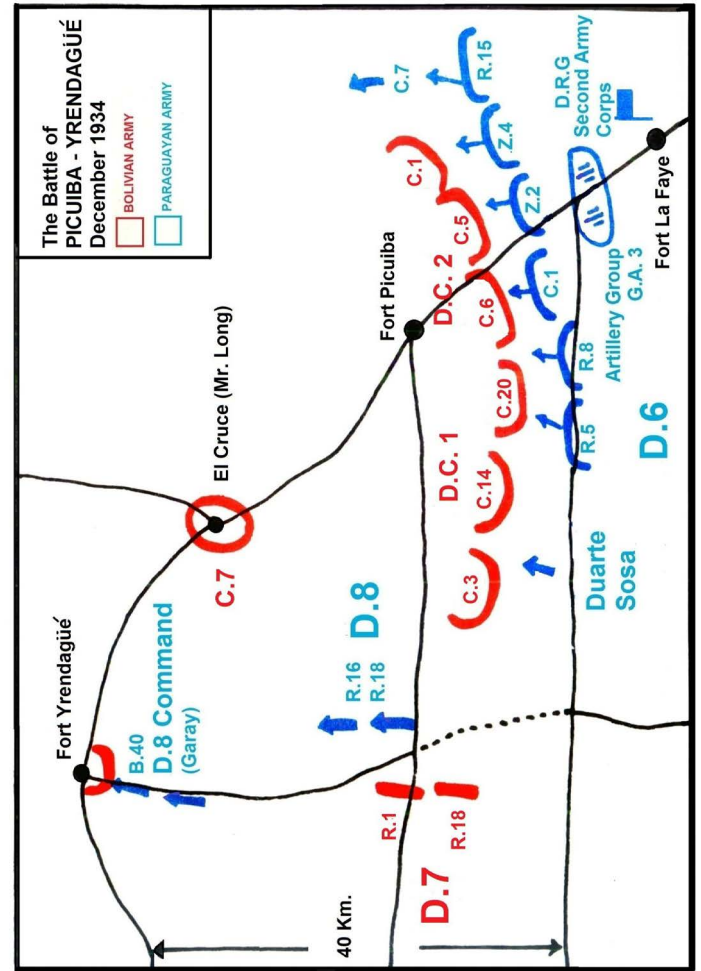
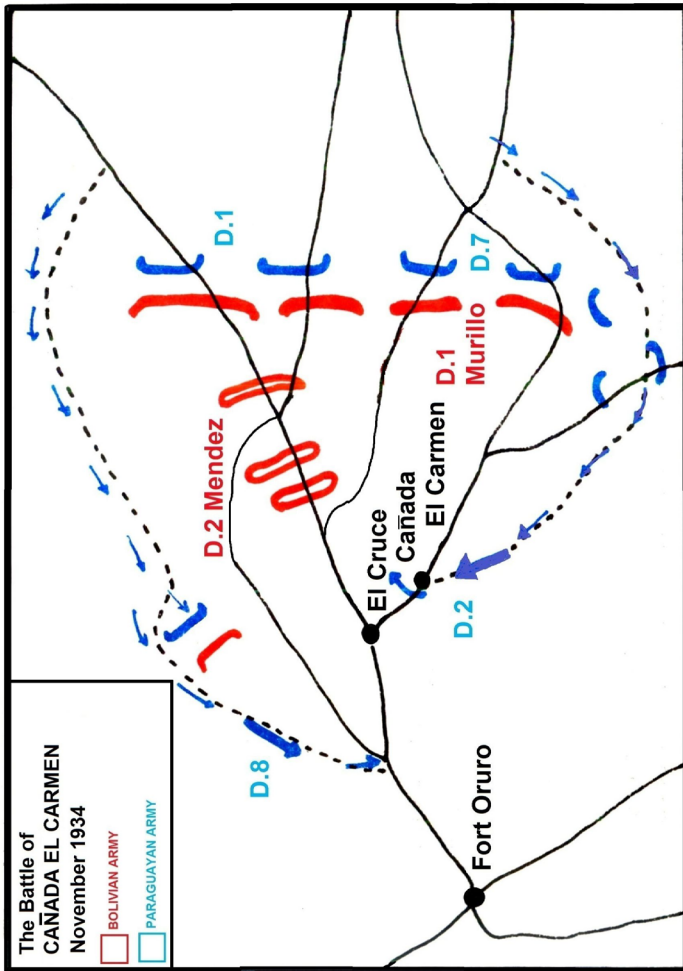
In the early 1930s, Bolivia signed a contract for a supply of European-style uniforms with Vickers: due to the global economic crisis, this was only partially fulfilled. This Bolivian infantry soldier is shown wearing one of the khaki uniforms that was delivered; it consisted of an infantry field cap, a Prussian blouse, a shirt, and trousers for use with gaiters and boots (the latter were replaced with traditional Bolivian sandals). The soldier was also equipped with a backpack, a blanket, and a shoulder bag. His belt is US-style, and contained pouches for ammunition for his firearm, a Mauser FN M1930 carbine. (Artwork by Anderson Subtil)

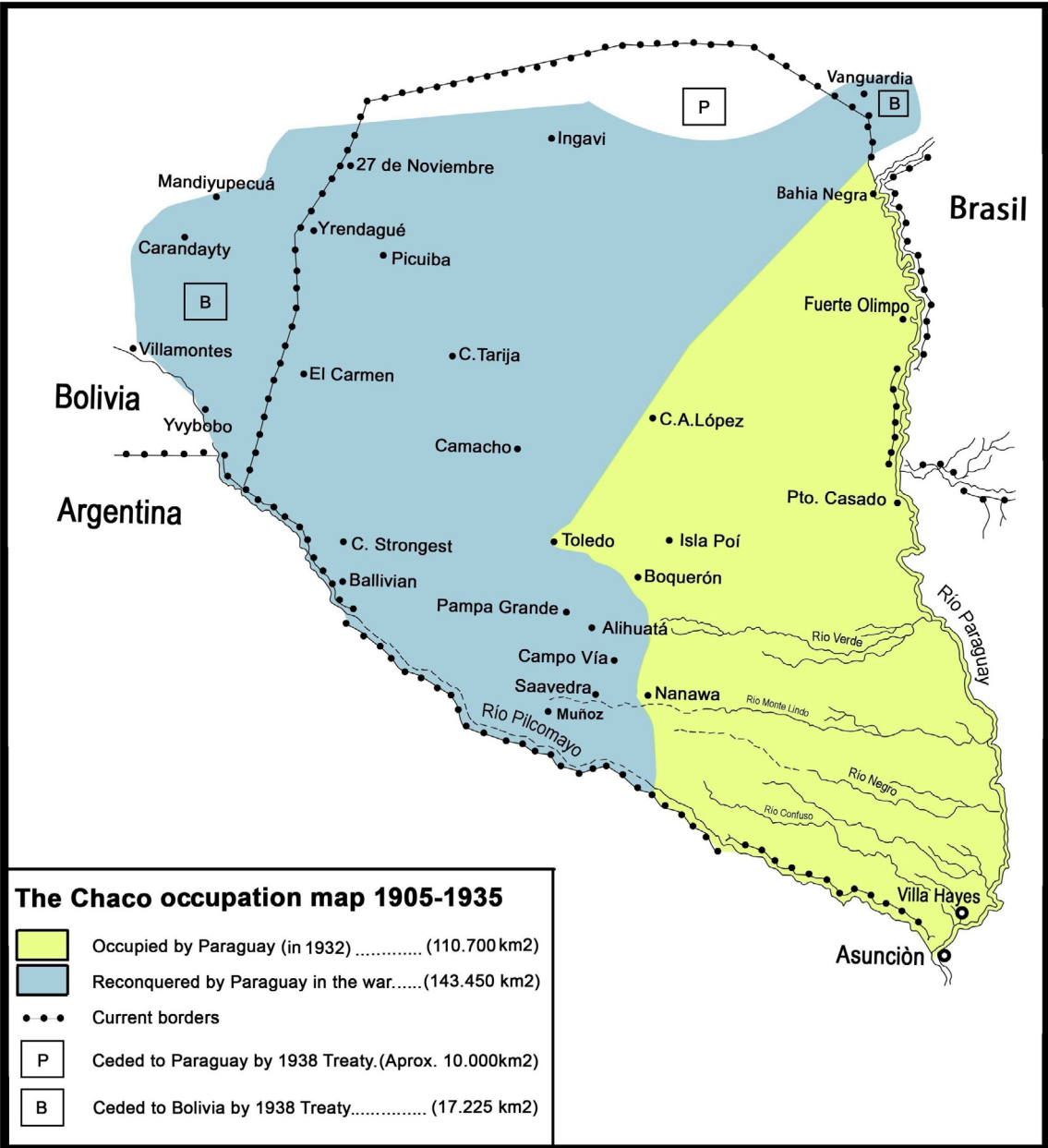
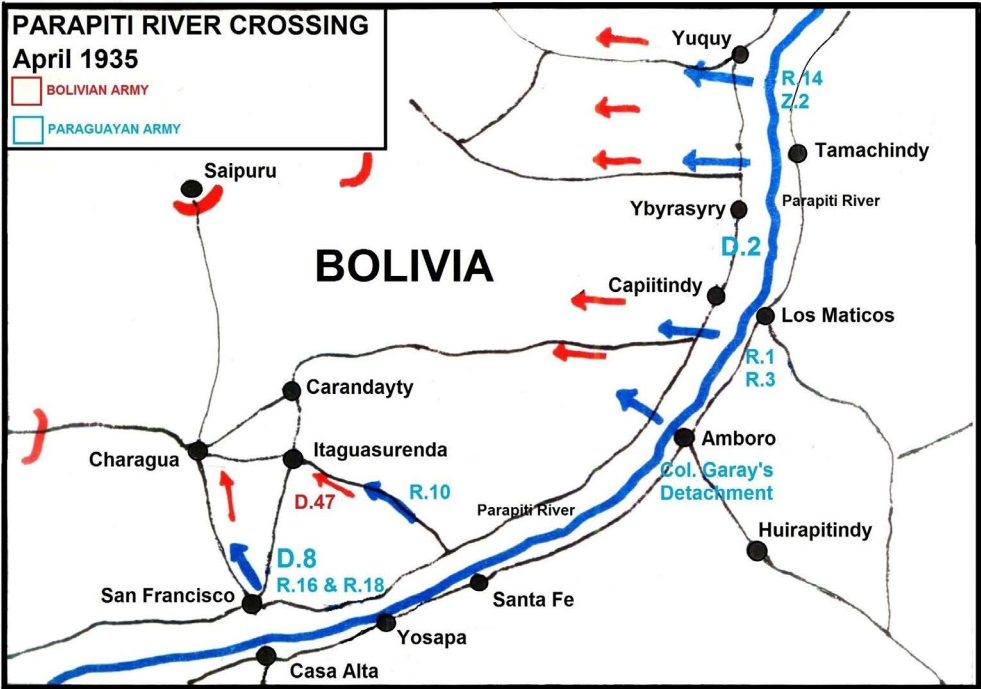


This Bolivian Lieutenant-Colonel was easily recognisable by the red band on the rank insignia, applied on a khaki-brown British uniform provided under the contract with Vickers. The latter included a field cap with national flag, Sam Browne belt and cavalry pants. The golden insignia on his lapels identified him as a member of the Bolivian General Staff. The holster and the magazine pouch were for a Luger Model 1906 pistol: standard weapon of Bolivian officers. The inset shows the Condor medal of Bolivia, which was called the "Medal for the Chaco Campaign". (Artwork by Anderson Subtil)











A Bolivian Army patrol. (Bolivian Army Archives)

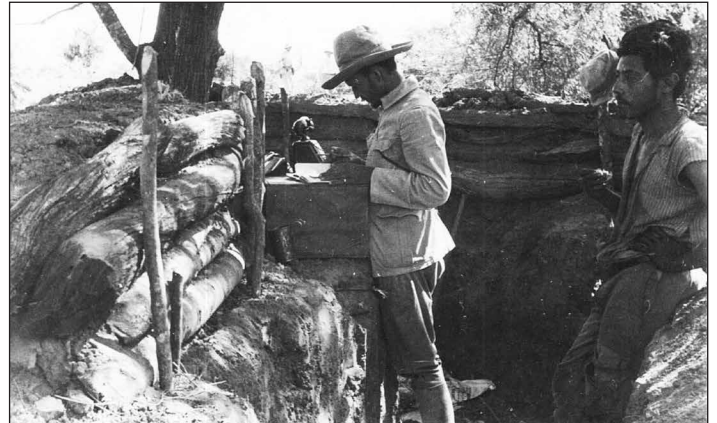


Navy Lieutenant Ignacio Tomas Keim (with a bandage on his head) being assisted by Army nurses 2nd Lieutenant Clotilde Pinho Insfran and Sergeant Arminda Veira Franco at Alihuatá. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)



Paraguayan Army Lieutenant Adolfo Ferreira instructing several privates how to handle an 81mm Stokes Brandt mortar. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

Subsequently, Bolivia rebuilt its army with the remains of its I Army Corps, with just some 4,500 men.



Paraguayan Captain Miguel Ángel Yegros in an artillery post equipped with a telephone. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)



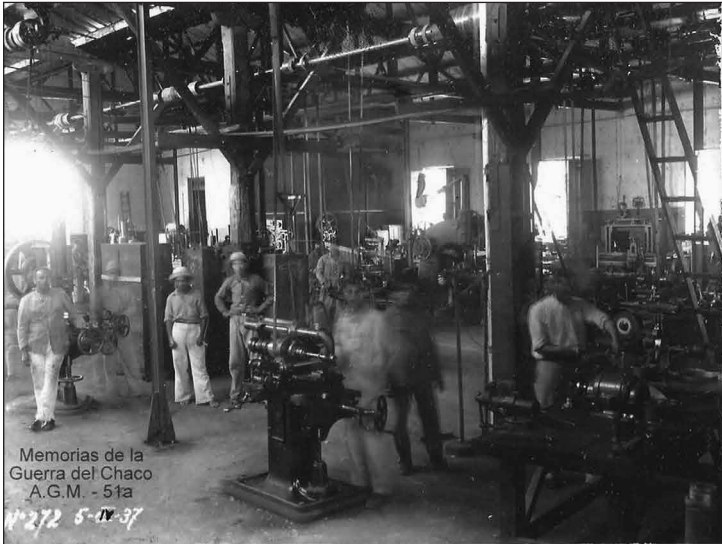
Left, Paraguayan Army trucks pulling captured Bolivian 105mm Vickers guns. Right, some of the Bolivian artillery captured at Campo Via, including 20mm Semag-Becker and 75mm Vickers guns. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



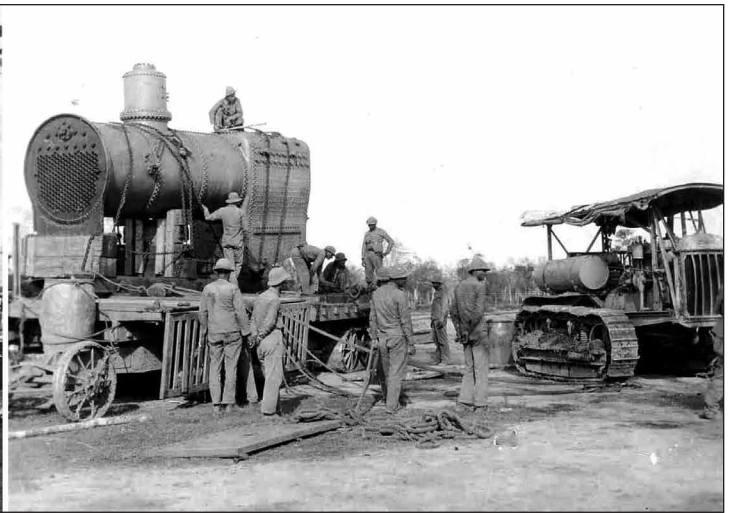
Left, Bolivian Army POWs being transported on board the cargo ship San Francisco to Asunción. Right, Bolivian POWs in Asunción under military escort. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



After the disaster at Campo Via, President Daniel Salamanca (left) appointed General Enrique Peñaranda (right) as commander-in-chief of the Bolivian Army, replacing General Hans Kundt, who returned to Germany. (Bolivian Army Archives)



The Paraguayan Navy Arsenal in Asunción. They manufactured ammunition, mortars, aviation bombs, truck bodies and hand grenades, and made all kinds of repairs to the Army's armament, including small arms, submachineguns, machineguns, heavy machineguns and pieces of artillery. (Paraguayan Navy Files)



Left, a Paraguayan Army turnery workshop at Minas Cué, a branch of the Navy Arsenal in the battlefield. Right, a Paraguayan Army Caterpillar Sixty tractor and a boiler for the Arsenal at Minas Cué. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)

6

THE CAMPAIGN OF 1934

The Battle of Campo Via inaugurated a new stage of the war. The Bolivian Army embarked on an uninterrupted retreat of about 300km to the heights of the Andean foothills, to the line La China–Magariños. The Paraguayan Army began a slow offensive after reorganising its disrupted cadres during an armistice offered by the Paraguayan president himself in order to satisfy a request from the League of Nations to halt the war and negotiate.

The Bolivians, who had not expected the Paraguayan offer of the armistice, reorganised their forces with contingents that were already arriving in the theatre of operations, obstructing the peace negotiations that ended up failing after 15 days, a gross error that would lead to them losing all the territory that they had occupied during their 30-year 'silent' advance in the Chaco.

In the opening months of 1934, General Estigarribia chose three directions for a renewal of the campaign, and sent each Paraguayan Army Corps along roads that the Bolivians had built themselves before the war. To the south, the III Army Corps, under Colonel Nicolás Delgado with 9,000 men, advanced on the Pilcomayo route,

taking small forts and reached the strongly defended fortification at Ballivián. To the north, the II Army Corps, with Colonel Rafael Franco commanding 6,000 men, opened a path (named Florida) from Camacho to the west to cut the eventual withdrawal of the Bolivian Army in the Pilcomayo sector, helped by Delgado's III Army Corps. In the centre, the I Army Corps, with 6,500 men under Colonel Gaudioso Núñez, advanced first to La China before converging north of Ballivián, where he faced the 8th Bolivian Division with 6,000 men. Through these roads, plus some additional routes, the war would develop until June 1935, when hostilities ended. During their many months of withdrawal, the Bolivians abandoned more than 10 forts that were occupied by the Paraguayans without firing a single shot.

In March 1934, the Paraguayans of Franco's II Army Corps, who had already occupied Camacho's abandoned fort on the road to Picuiba, identified a Bolivian unit at Cañada Tarija along the same road. On the 27th, the Paraguayan 6th Army Division, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Federico W. Smith, in a brilliant surprise manoeuvre, encircled 1,500 men of the Bolivian Regiment 'Montes',

which suffered 900 dead, taken prisoners or missing. Its commander, Lieutenant Colonel Angel Bavia, tried unsuccessfully to commit suicide, but did die several days later in a Paraguayan hospital as a result of his self-inflicted wounds.

In April, on the Pilcomayo Front, the Paraguayan I Army Corps attacked Las Conchitas, where the Bolivians were carrying out a mobile defence, giving up territory but causing several Paraguayan casualties. The clash was presented in Bolivia as a resounding success, as the Bolivian command needed something to counteract the previous month's disastrous news from Cañada Tarija. However, General Peñaranda was strongly rebuked by the Bolivian President, Dr Salamanca, not only for losing his position but for having falsely reported a victory.

The Battle of the Strongest, or Cañada Cochabamba

By mid-May, the Paraguayan I Army Corps of some 7,000 men, advancing from the central road without links to the other two Army Corps, ran from southeast to northwest through 59km of the so-called *Camino* or *Picada Lóbrego* (*Lóbrego* trail or road) and made contact with the 8th Division of the Bolivian II Army Corps under the command of Colonel Bernardino Bilbao Rioja. Colonel Angel Rodriguez of the Bolivian General Staff devised a plan to lay a trap for the Paraguayan I Army Corps by deploying that 8th Division across the *Lóbrego* road to entertain the Paraguayans while moving all of the reinforced 9th Division, with up to 9,000 men, from the south behind them. To finalise the plan, the 3rd Division of the Bolivian II Army Corps had to carry out a similar manoeuvre in the north. The objective was to cover all the Paraguayan I Army Corps with three entire divisions.

Meanwhile, General Estigarribia planned to mount another typical Paraguayan *corralito* (encirclement) operation against the Bolivian 8th Division, which he intended to tie in front with his 7th Division, led by Lieutenant Colonel José A. Ortiz, while Lieutenant Colonel José Rosa Vera's 2nd Division enveloped the enemy in the north. By so doing, Estigarribia aimed to cut the path towards the Pilcomayo and isolate 70 percent of the Bolivian Army in the Chaco in a single operation. It was the only time in the war that both sides decided to make an offensive operation at the same time.

The Paraguayans began their operation on the 13th with the opening of a manoeuvring trail with a wide turn (almost 30km long) to the north of the road that led to the *Lóbrego* road. The Bolivians, in a bid to make the Paraguayans fall into their trap, retreated a few kilometres to previously established positions which provided a better defence. Not wanting to lose contact, the 7th Division followed the Bolivians and pinned them down on the road, but Ortiz neglected his left flank (to the southwest), failing to send patrols that could detect enemy movement. Meanwhile, Vera's 2nd Division entered the manoeuvring trail to the north, parallel to the *Lóbrego* road, on 14 May, but soon collided with the Bolivian 8th Division, which had been deployed across the trail. The trap had been set.

The reinforced Bolivian 9th Division – which had been transported more than 300km in trucks – entered the forest on foot on the 19th to start the manoeuvre from the south and get behind the Paraguayan I Army Corps. Unfortunately, an error in the instructions in the Order of Operations caused the division to be led to a place on the *Lóbrego* road in the middle of the Paraguayan 7th and 8th Divisions, which were separated by just 5km. The Bolivians were thus behind the 7th Division but in front of the 8th Division. This error was the first of several that the Bolivian forces committed, preventing a total victory. Upon leaving the *Lóbrego* road, without having been discovered by Ortiz and his 7th Division, the Bolivians enveloped a

small Paraguayan battalion of 150 men that temporarily halted the Bolivian effort and disrupted the operation, the commander of the 9th Division, Lieutenant Colonel Barros, hesitating in his advance to the north to link with the 3rd Division. If doing so, he would have exposed his right flank to the Paraguayan 8th Division that had been left out of the Bolivian envelopment, and he also had that annoying Paraguayan battalion in the middle of his deployment.

On the 20th, General Estigarribia reacted by ordering the withdrawal of the 7th and 2nd Divisions, which had to be done by opening trails eastwards through dense forest, avoiding the *Lóbrego* road, then in Bolivian hands. Ortiz of the 7th Division obeyed his orders immediately and managed to save the entire division, but Vera did not follow suit, an error that would cost him half of his division. The Bolivian 3rd Division, led by Lieutenant Colonel Frias, interrupted the escape of Vera's troops, capturing two regiments and elements of others – about 1,200 men in total – on the 24th. The following day, the 150-strong Paraguayan battalion, led by Captain Joel Estigarribia, having run out of ammunition and without water for the last 48 hours, surrendered unconditionally.

Although the battle ended with a Bolivian victory, their only one in the entire war, the Paraguayans avoided total defeat as they managed to save 80 percent of the I Army Corps. However, the corps commander, Colonel Gaudioso Núñez, was dismissed and subjected to a court martial, as were the other two divisional commanders, Ortiz and Vera. Thirty days later, the Bolivians abandoned their positions and retreated to the north. The Battle of Strongest, or Cañada Cochabamba, had no strategic consequence in the war, but served to raise the morale of Bolivian troops who had not tasted any offensive victory since the beginning of the conflict.

Thereafter, the war stalled for some time until August, when Estigarribia devised a stratagem to decongest the Pilcomayo Front of Bolivian troops. He ordered Franco and his II Army Corps to move north on almost unpopulated roads from Pícuiba to Carandaty, in undisputed Bolivian territory. Franco quickly advanced his troops in trucks, taking his 6th Division into Bolivian territory in just 13 days. The manoeuvre caused the Bolivians to withdraw large numbers of troops from Ballivián to Carandaty, from where they drove Franco back to his starting point. The manoeuvre lasted until November, when Estigarribia moved on to the second phase of his plan.

The Battle of El Carmen

On 8 November, two patrols were sent more than 40km deep into enemy territory to gain information about the feasibility of the operation's second phase. The Paraguayan troops, numbering some 10,000 men, encircled the 7,500-strong Bolivian Reserve Corps with two pincers, one from the north and the other from the south.

The Paraguayan 1st Division (of the I Army Corps) tied down the Bolivians from the front, while Colonel Eugenio A. Garay's 8th Division of the II Army Corps manoeuvred in the north and the 2nd Division led by Lieutenant Colonel Rivas Ortellado of I Army Corps moved from the south. It took Rivas only 48 hours to push the Bolivians through the forest, without firing a single shot until reaching the El Carmen fortress, some 30km behind the Bolivian lines. The fort's garrison fled to the east. Garay took more time since he had to fight against positions that the Bolivians had created just a few days before, but he still encircled practically all the Bolivian troops on the left flank. Unusually, the powerful Bolivian aviation forces failed to discover the Paraguayan operation until it was well underway. The operation ended on the 16th, with some 5,000 Bolivian prisoners being taken. Garay's 8th Division alone captured more than 60 light

machineguns and about 25 intact trucks, in which the prisoners were taken to the Paraguayan rear.

The Battle of El Carmen was the most perfectly designed, prepared and executed of the war, and although some 1,500 Bolivians escaped and continued fighting, the action achieved what General Estigarribia had intended. The entire Bolivian Army withdrew – in orderly fashion – from the Ballivián front, while the impregnable fortress of El Carmen was abandoned 24 hours later. The Bolivian withdrawal, undertaken in stages, did not stop until it reached Bolivia. These events also had a political consequence, with President Salamanca attempting to change the entire staff of his army for the disastrous results of this campaign, including the removal of General Peñaranda and his chief of staff, Colonel José D. Toro. However, when the president went to Villamontes to enforce his decision in person, a military uprising overthrew him from the presidency, replacing him with the vice president, José Luis Tejada Sorzano. Peñaranda subsequently continued in command.

Battle of Yrendagüé-Picuiba

While the Battle of El Carmen was ongoing, Estigarribia, confident of a victorious result, ordered that on the Northern Front, Rafael Franco's II Army Corps capture the wells at Yrendagüé that provided water to the Bolivian Cavalry Corps led by Colonel José D. Toro. For this, Franco ordered an infiltration of the Bolivian lines with Colonel Garay's 8th

Division that only a few days before had successfully operated in El Carmen. Meanwhile, Franco intended to wrap up the enemy positions in Picuiba with his 6th Division and General Reserve Division. The operation was not carried out according to classical military doctrine, since it was intended that 6,000 Paraguayans would infiltrate and encircle 9,000 Bolivians. The operation began on 5 December with a 70km march through the desert by Garay's 8th Division that was not detected until dawn on day eight when the vanguard of the column reached the wells and captured them after a brief fight.

The Bolivians had not expected such a bold Paraguayan manoeuvre, and with the loss of their water supply, they left Picuiba hastily before the Paraguayan forces could capture them. The retreating Bolivians took two routes: a complete infantry division moved to the west and escaped intact, while two cavalry divisions on foot went to the north, to El Cruce. In this second group, the artillery and officers were evacuated in trucks, while the rest of the troops had to march to El Cruce, where they received orders from Colonel Toro to retake Yrendagüé. Without water or their leading officers – Toro was 200km away with his officers – the Bolivian forces ignored the order and instead headed for Fort 27 de Noviembre. Along the way, some 1,500 Bolivians died of thirst and a similar number were taken prisoner by the Paraguayans, who abandoned their attacks to rescue them from certain death. The Paraguayans took a huge amount of booty, including 5,000 abandoned rifles and hundreds of automatic machineguns. As

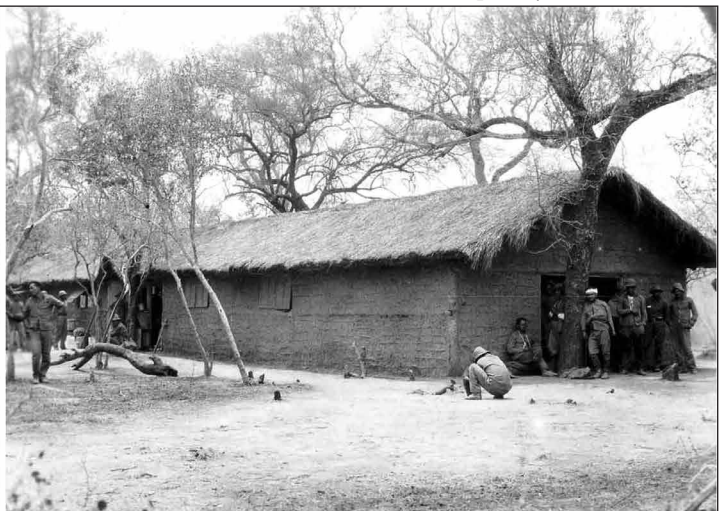
a consequence of the battle, the Bolivians withdrew about 200km.

The Battle of Ybybobó

In December, 2,000 Bolivians occupied an elevated location on the banks of the Pilcomayo River in the Bolivian town of Ybybobó and about 8km onto the plain. The Paraguayan III Army Corps commanded by Colonel Nicolás Delgado sent the 5th Cavalry Regiment, 7th Infantry Regiment and 4th Cavalry Regiment, with about 2,400 men, to make another encirclement. Their efforts were helped by the fact that the



Paraguayan Army trucks getting water from a well at Fort Camacho. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden)



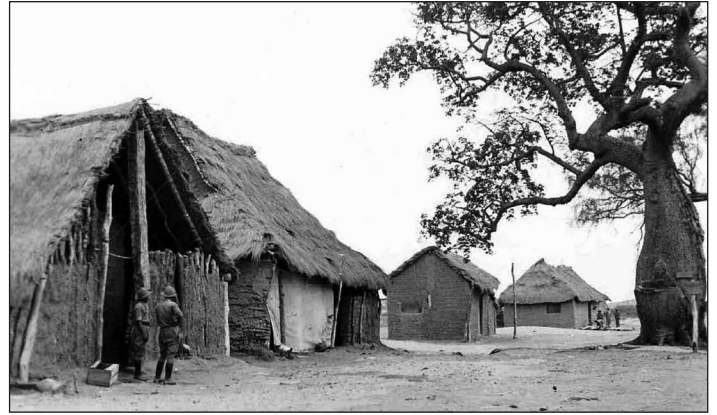
Left, a Paraguayan Army workshop at Fort Camacho, which was renamed Fort Lopez de Filippis. Right, Paraguayan Army troops at Camacho. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden)



The Paraguayan 1st Cavalry Regiment 'Valois Rivarola' advancing towards Loma Vistosa, near Pícuiba in 1934. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)

Bolivians had their backs to the river, and on the night of 27 December it rained heavily, which prevented the Bolivians from detecting their approach. At dawn the next day, the Paraguayans broke the Bolivian line 8km north of Ybybobó and surrounded the enemy positions.

Some 1,200 Bolivian troops surrendered and the rest fled. A couple of hundred young Bolivians tried to cross the Pilcomayo River using flat-keel boats, but the strong current overturned them and they



Fort Pícuiba after being occupied by the Paraguayan Army. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)

drowned. The Paraguayans were already on Bolivian soil and heading for the city of Villamontes, the nerve centre of the Bolivian Army. The Bolivian command considered abandoning the city and positioning itself in the Andean foothills, but the idea was abandoned and it was decided to fortify the city with two strong lines of defence – about 30km long – from the Pilcomayo River to the Aguaragué mountain range. If the Paraguayans could take the city, nothing could now stop them from pushing deep inside Bolivia.

7

THE FINAL STRETCH – THE CAMPAIGN OF 1935 – THE WAR ARRIVES IN BOLIVIA

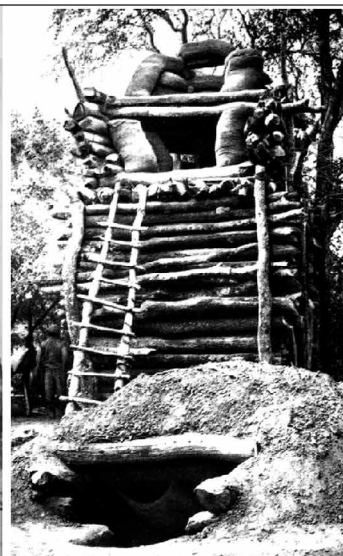
In January 1935, the Paraguayan Army – in slow pursuit of the Bolivian Army – arrived at Capiirendá, in the foothills of the *Cordillera del Aguaragué* (the Andes), inhabited by the Chiriguanos aborigines, a place which Paraguay understood was the colonial boundary of its predecessor, the Spanish province of Paraguay. What could not be achieved by diplomacy was now achieved by force, with Capiirendá

occupied by the I Army Corps, under Colonel Carlos J. Fernandez, on 12 January.

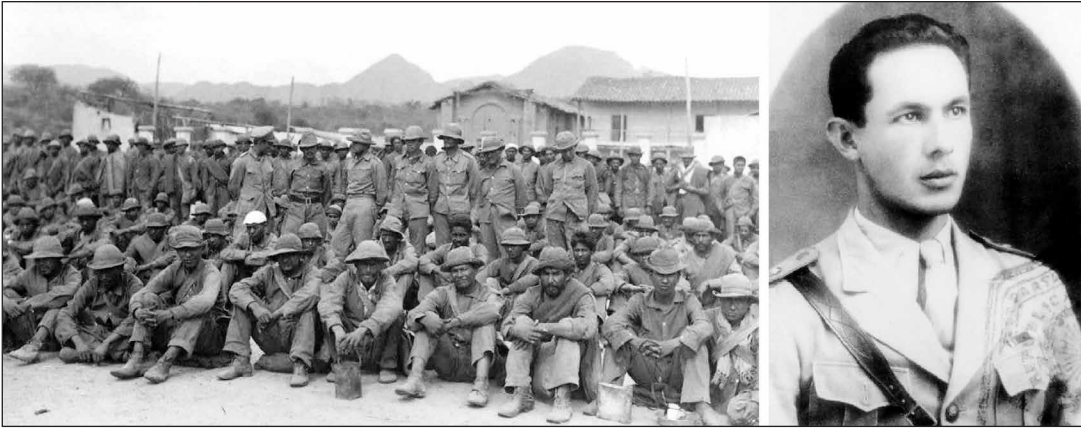
Meanwhile, the II Army Corps, led by Colonel Rafael Franco, approached the banks of the Parapití River, another natural border that the Paraguayans claimed from Bolivia before the war. In Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the alarm spread and anticipating defeat, the authorities moved to La Paz, with all their money and valuables deposited in banks in the capital. On 16 January, Franco crossed the Parapití.

At this point, the Paraguayans received some bad news: the League of Nations, which had recommended its members to introduce arms embargoes to both the warring countries, lifted it for Bolivia but kept it for Paraguay, who requested reconsideration of the decision. The request was denied, so Paraguay withdrew from the League as the war reached its final stretch.

Despite what seemed to be a Bolivian diplomatic victory, new Bolivian President Tejada



A Bolivian Army observation post (left) and a fortified position (right). (Bolivian Army Archives)



Left, Paraguayan Army POWs in Bolivia. Right, Paraguayan Captain Joel Estigarribia, who became a POW at Strongest. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden)



Paraguayan infantry with a Colt heavy machinegun. The officer on the right has a Bergmann-Schmeisser submachinegun. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden)



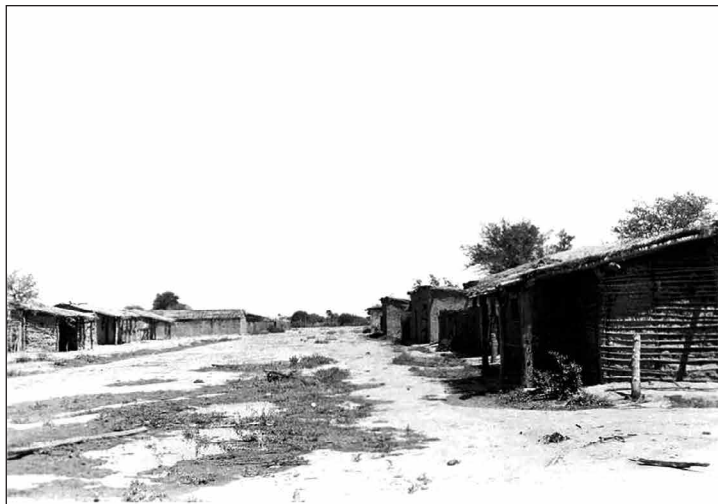
The Bolivian 3rd Infantry Regiment 'Pérez' in full gear. (Bolivian Army Archives)

Sorzano, with the knowledge and agreement of the Bolivian Command, initiated confidential negotiations with Chile to seek a ceasefire, and with the Argentines to mediate with the Paraguayans. It was the last attempt to stop the war, but the first of clearly Bolivian origin. The Bolivian agent in the talks was Minister of War Juan María Zalles.

The Battle of Villamontes

The armies would face each other for the last time with considerable numbers at Villamontes. Bolivia had assembled a total of 40,000 men, all armed with new and better weapons, although their training instruction was patchy for large-scale manoeuvres. The Paraguayans had no more than 17,000 armed effectives, but all of them were veterans of previous battles, many having not returned to their homes in three years of fighting. So what one side had – be it numbers or training – the other lacked.

The Bolivian High Command needed a volunteer to command the defensive action at the city of Villamontes, with Colonel Bernardino Bilbao Rioja assuming responsibility since no other Bolivian leader would have accepted the role. Bilbao Rioja hurried to strengthen two fortified lines about 12km east of Villamontes and some 32km in length. The northern end of the defences faced the *Cordillera del Aguaraugué* and the extreme south the Pilcomayo River, so Bilbao Rioja concentrated his forces to defend the area in the east, where the Paraguayans had been observed moving very slowly towards them over the previous 30 days. Bolivia had 24,000 men in Villamontes and more than 60 guns in four artillery groups, equipped with some 12,000 rounds. Facing them were 14,000 Paraguayans in the I and III Army Corps, with no more than 12 guns and only 300 shells.



The Bolivian fortress of Ballivián (left) and part of its system of trenches (right). (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



Bolivian Army commander General Enrique Peñaranda (centre) meeting several military chiefs and officers in a trench. (Bolivian Army Archives)



Paraguayan troops at Yrendagüé. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



Bolivian soldiers being rescued by the Paraguayan Army along the 'Desperation Trail'. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)

On 16 February, the Paraguayans concentrated four regiments of the I Army Corps at dawn, some 2,500 men led by Fernández in a sector no more than 500 metres from the Bolivian fortified front line. Meanwhile, the rest of the I Army Corps (about 4,000 men) and the 7,000 troops of the III Army Corps maintained demonstration fire against the Bolivians. The Paraguayan tactics involved a frontal morning attack with two paired regiments, followed by two others to exploit the breakthrough, which successfully advanced 500 metres against some 300 drowsy Bolivian defenders, who had not noticed the approach of the Paraguayans around the Abaroa Lagoon the previous night. The Bolivian line was broken in less than 25 minutes, with the Bolivian artillery unable to act in time because it had no information from its front-line observers, who were taken prisoner during the attack or withdrew, leaving behind their communication equipment. In the first half hour of combat, the Paraguayan artillery of the I Army Corps used up its last 300 rounds. By 8 a.m., they had moved their guns out of the reach of the Bolivian cannons.

A second assault to increase the size of the pocket was carried out by the Paraguayans on 20 February, and although they achieved a small advance, the



The new President of Bolivia with his chief of staff. First row, from left to right, José Luis Fernando Guachalla (Minister of War), General Enrique Peñaranda (commander-in-chief), the President of Bolivia Dr Luis Tejada Sorzano, Colonel Julio Sanjinéz and Enrique Sanjinéz (Minister of Defence). Second row, from left to right, Major Eulogio Ruiz, Major René Rocabado, Lieutenant Colonel Luis Añez, Colonel David Toro, Colonel Rivera, Colonel Bernardino Bilbao Rioja, Major Jorge Jordan and Lieutenant Colonel Oscar Moscoso. (Bolivian Army Archives)



Bolivian Army officers and NCOs at Yrendagüé. (Bolivian Army Archives)



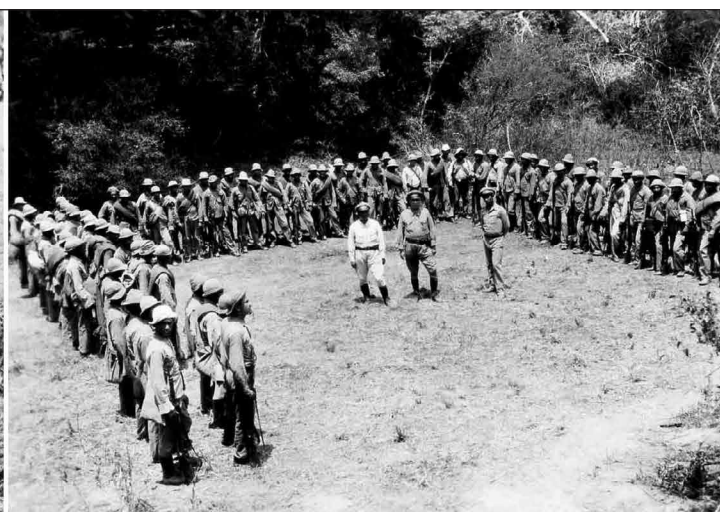
The cruelty of war. Left, the corpses of two Bolivian privates killed by thirst on what became known as the 'Desperation Trail'. Right, Paraguayan soldiers killed during the Battle of Villamontes. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)



A Paraguayan Army sentry post in the Pilcomayo sector. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden)



The oldest soldier in the Paraguayan Army, Sergeant Adbón Rivero (left), who was in his 80s, and maybe the youngest, in his teens, who were both assistants at the COMANCHACO. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)



Left, a Paraguayan Army column led by a captain (the company commander), a lieutenant and a sergeant. A Paraguayan Army company with three platoons, with their commanders in the centre. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden)



Four brothers in the Bolivian Army – Carlos, Roberto, Mamerto and Gaston Querejazu Calvo. Roberto wrote a very famous book on the Chaco War, titled *Masamaclay*. (Bolivian Army Archives)

Bolivian artillery again stopped them. In that Paraguayan assault, a whole section of Bolivians was annihilated after enduring three attacks in a row; what was later called 'the iron section' was commanded by Lieutenant Mendez Arcos, who was killed in action and is to this day



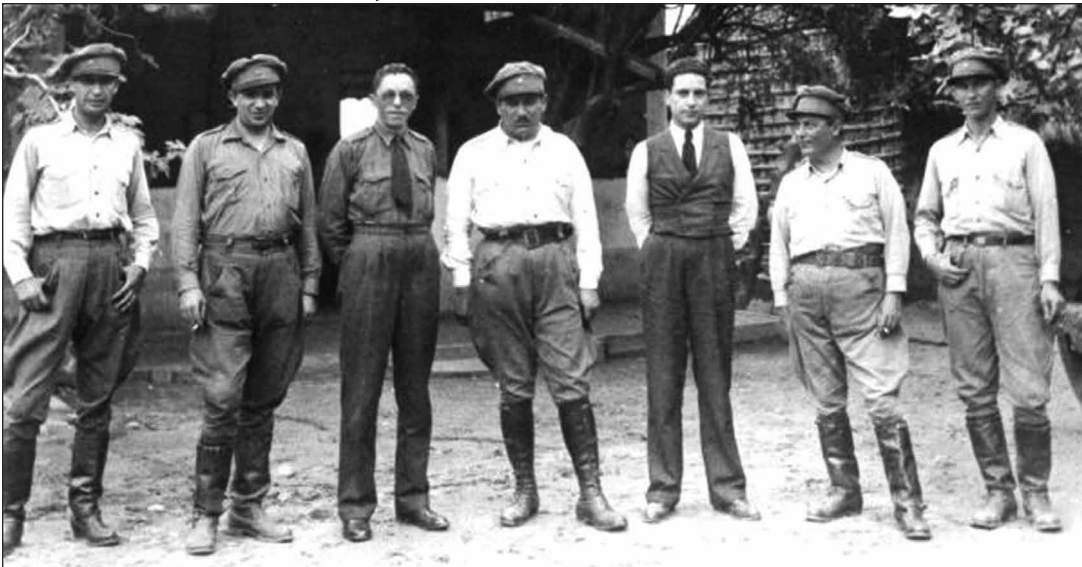
Bolivian artillery officers and soldiers with General Peñaranda. (Bolivian Army Archives)

honoured as a hero in Bolivia. The Paraguayans maintained the 'Bag of Caigua' for about 30 days, with only minor modifications made to the lines, until 16 March, when Bilbao Rioja made his move to recover the lost ground. A heavy artillery bombardment followed by a combined infantry assault along three of the four sides of the pocket forced the Paraguayans to retreat to their starting points, and the front lines were back where they were a month earlier.

On 23 March, a weak Paraguayan attempt to break the first Bolivian line was stopped short by the defenders. Stillness then reigned



A Paraguayan Army truck near the Parapiti River. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)

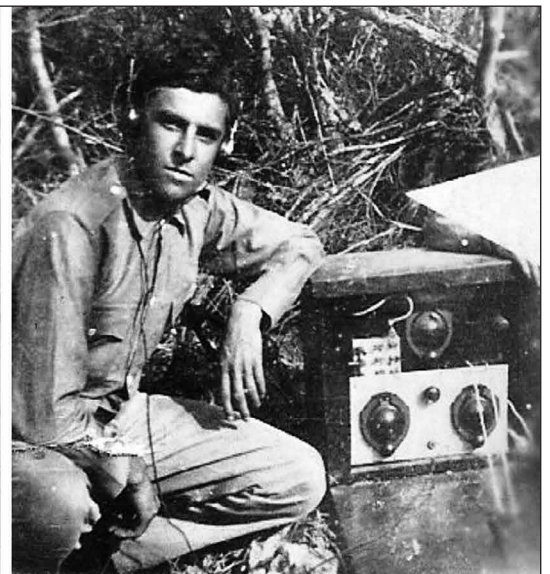
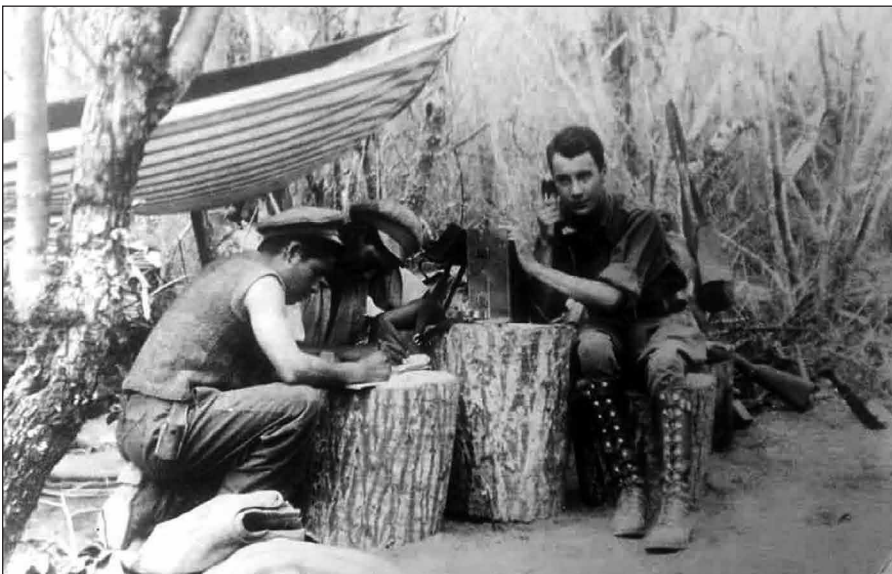


From left to right, Bolivian Army Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Ballivián, Colonel David Toro, the Minister of Defence Gabriel Gonsalvez, General Enrique Peñaranda, the Minister of Education Enrique Baldovino, Colonel Ángel Rodríguez and Major Germán Busch. Four of these men – Ballivián, Toro, Peñaranda and Busch – would be Presidents of Bolivia in the postwar period. (Bolivian Army Archives)

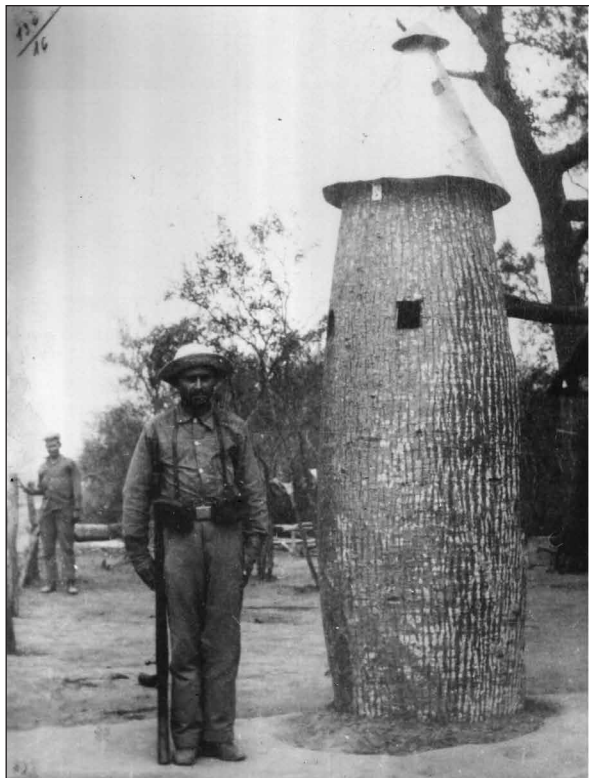
along the front until June, when the war came to an end. The Bolivians in Villamontes observed the Paraguayans from their lofty vantage points for three more months without moving their troops. During this time, the action moved to the northern theatre, in the Parapiti River sector.

The Bolivian April counteroffensive

General Estigarribia, who had not abandoned the principle of the offensive since the Battle of Alihuatá-Campo Vía in December 1933, continued to seek opportunities to put pressure on the Bolivians, fully aware of the confidential peace efforts that were making good process. In April, it was decided a deep incursion would be made by the II Army Corps to Charagua, which was taken on the 15th, but a rapid Bolivian reaction surprised the Paraguayans, who had to withdraw and even lost territory they had conquered in January. They were pushed back over the Parapiti River – which they would never cross again – and only halted the Bolivian counteroffensive at Huirapitindy and Mandiyupécua in May. The counteroffensive resulted in large losses to both armies, which for the Bolivians meant



Radio communication was vital in the Chaco War. Left, a Bolivian 14th Regiment 'Florida' radio operator and assistants. Right, Lieutenant Americo Picco, a Paraguayan radio operator. All Paraguayan communications by radio or telegraph were strictly made in the Guaraní language, which was spoken by almost all the officers and soldiers of the Paraguayan Army. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)



Left, a Paraguayan infantry soldier in full gear at a fort's sentry post. The post was carved in a Samu'ú trunk. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN).

Right, a Bolivian infantry soldier in full gear. (Bolivian Army Archives)



isolated actions and minor Bolivian successes that led to no important changes in the battle lines.

The last battle of the war: The Battle of Ingavi. Negotiations for a ceasefire

In May 1935, talks began in Buenos Aires between the foreign ministers of both the warring countries, with mediation from Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Peru. The Bolivians insisted on the need to make the ceasefire coincide with the definition of their borders, whereas the Paraguayans believed the war should be ended first and the troops demobilised, establishing a line of separation for both armies.

The last battle of the Chaco War took place at Ingavi on 7 and 8 June 1935, with a victory for the Paraguayan Army. At

that only the first of three phases of the planned campaign could be accomplished. Thus, although this was a significant Paraguayan retreat, the encirclement of their forces in the central sector could not be put into practice.

Thus, a tense calm descended on the entire southern sector (Villamontes in the Department of Tarija) and central sector (Charagua-Camiri in the Department of Santa Cruz), with only

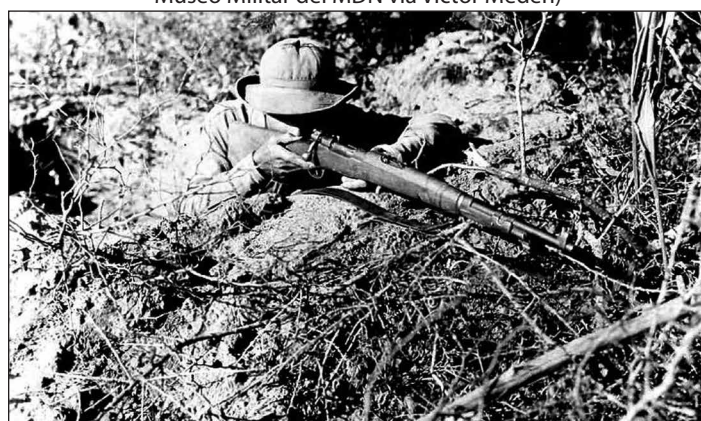
at the end of April 1935, the 6th Bolivian Division, commanded by Colonel Ángel Ayoroa, with the 14th Infantry Regiment 'Florida'



Paraguayan Army Colt heavy machinegun and its crew with their officer. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden)



A Bolivian Army Colt heavy machinegun mounted on a trunk used for AA fire, with its crew. (Bolivian Army Archives)



A Paraguayan infantry private aiming his Mauser rifle in the Villamontes sector, February 1935. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden)



Lieutenant Colonel Abdón Palacios, commander of the 5th Division, interrogating a Bolivian POW. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)



Bolivian officers and soldiers with the corpses of three Paraguayan privates during the Battle of Villamontes. (Bolivian Army Archives)



Bolivian Army Detachment Alzieuri troops on trucks crossing a trail on 16 March 1935. (Bolivian Army Archives)



A Bolivian Army Vickers tank in the city of Villamontes. (Bolivian Army Archives)

and 2nd Cavalry Regiment '*Ballivián*', began an advance on Ingavi. The Paraguayan detachment that defended the sector was led by Lieutenant Colonel José María Cazal, who was sent there urgently by General Estigarribia in light of the imminent Bolivian offensive. His orders were that Ingavi should not fall into enemy hands, given that diplomatic talks were underway and the strategic objective of keeping Bolivia away from the upper Paraguay River. The Paraguayan force was composed of the 3rd Regiment '*Corrales*', 11th Regiment '*Avay*' and the 40th Battalion.

The first Bolivian objective was *Pozo del Tigre*, an advanced position 9km from the Ingavi fortress. The Paraguayan troops that defended that position were pressed frontally, but the Bolivian regiments attacking the fort were repulsed, suffering about 100 casualties. Ayoroa decided to barricade himself in *Pozo del Tigre*, waiting for more reinforcements for a new attack.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Colonel Cazal, with no more than 850 men, began to surround the 14th Infantry Regiment '*Florida*' in *Pozo del Tigre*, moving speedily and in silence due to their knowledge of the land, cutting the Ingavi–Ravelo road behind the Bolivian troops and completing the encirclement on 5 June. The 2nd Cavalry Regiment '*Ballivián*' tried without success to open a breach from outside and facilitate the withdrawal of their besieged comrades.

Over the following days, Cazal's forces accelerated their advance along the Ingavi–Ravelo road, chasing the dispersed and demoralised forces of the rest of the 6th Division and also those from the 5th Division that came to their aid. The Paraguayan force did not give the Bolivians time to stop in any defensive



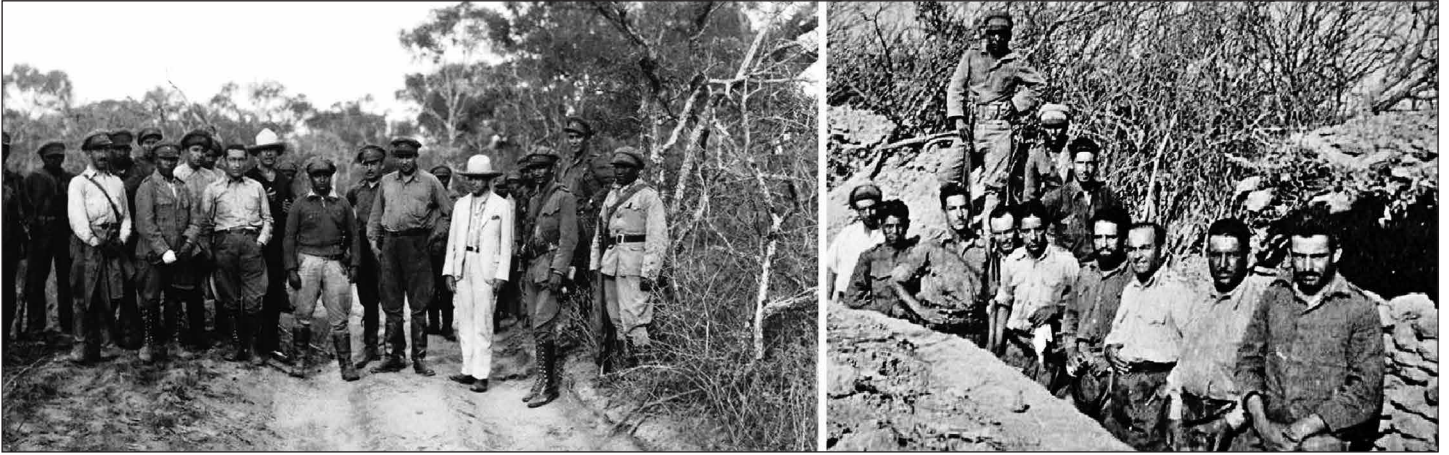
Bolivian Infantry Regiment 'Campos' troops in the Iguiraru sector. (Bolivian Army Archives)



Left, wounded soldiers about to be transported in a Junkers Ju.52/3m. Right, wounded Bolivian soldiers in hospital, attended by doctors and nurses. (Bolivian Army Archives)



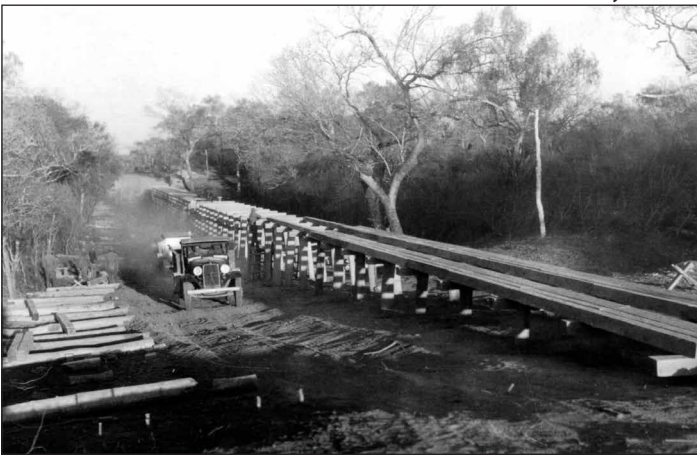
A Bolivian Army officer and soldiers burying a comrade. (Bolivian Army Archives)



Left, Bolivian Army Colonel José David Toro Ruilova with fellow officers. Right, Chilean volunteers in the Bolivian Army. (Bolivian Army Archives)



Paraguayan Army sappers building roads in the Carandaty sector, in Bolivian territory. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



A railway bridge being built by Paraguayan Army sappers at Mosquito Creek for the Casado railroad. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



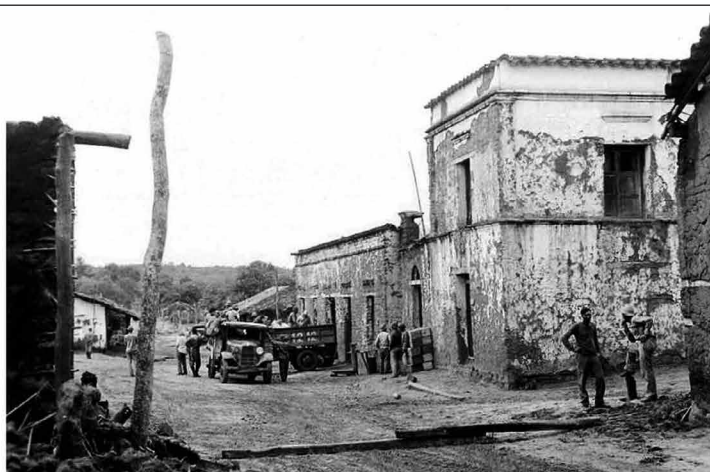
Soldiers playing Paraguayan music. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



Left, a Paraguayan Army private getting water from a creek at Garrapatal. Right, a lagoon used by the Paraguayan Army to wash clothes and take a bath. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



Paraguayan Army troops in the Bolivian town of Carandaty in 1935. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



Paraguayan Army soldiers cleaning their weapons in the Pilcomayo sector. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



A fully armed Paraguayan platoon at Fort 27 de Noviembre in 1935. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



A Paraguayan Army truck on patrol near Machareti, Bolivia, in 1935. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



A Paraguayan Army trench in the Madrejón sector. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)

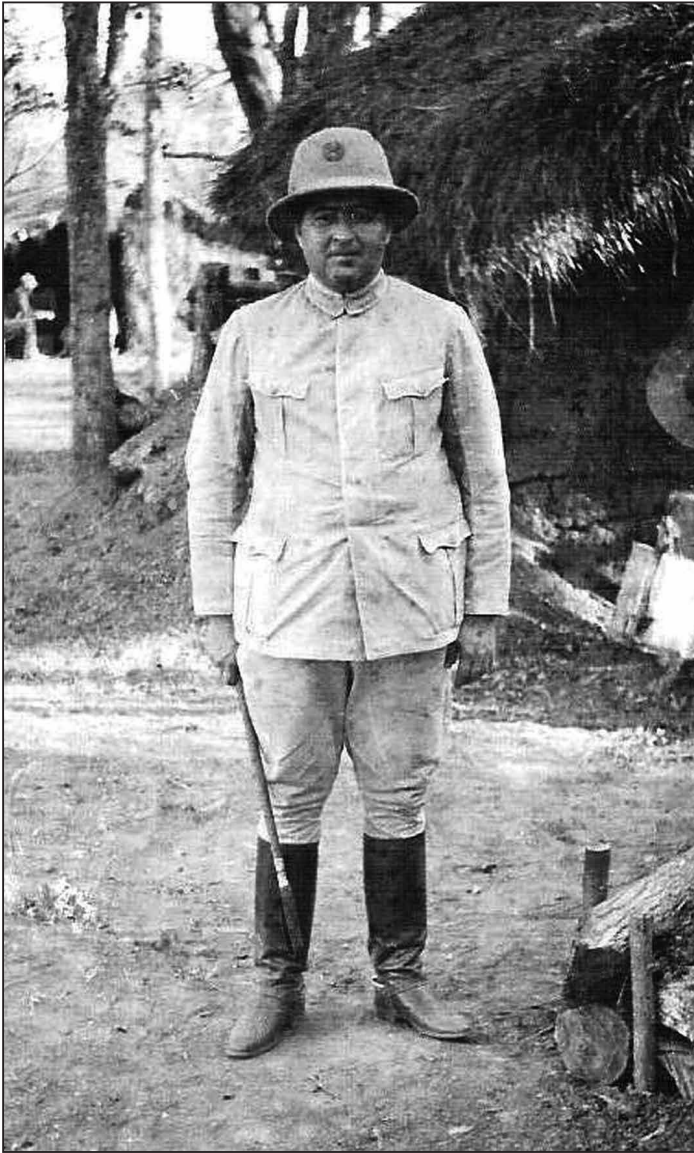
positions, so they had to continue their exhausting retreat towards Ravelo.

The Battle of Ingavi ended with the capture of Lieutenant Colonel Bretel, commander of the 6th Division, along with two other senior officers, plus seven junior officers and 361 soldiers, as well as many trucks, weapons and supplies. The defeat influenced the decision

of the Bolivian command to demand that its diplomats accept the Paraguayan proposals and sign the peace protocol.

Diplomatic talks on 8 June established some agreement with the Paraguayan peace proposals. Then, on the night that the Bolivian defeat at Ingavi was announced in Buenos Aires, within a few hours, Bolivian delegate Dr Tomas Elio accepted a final clause that did not address the original Bolivian interests.

By the signing of the Peace Protocol of 12 June 1935, the war came to an end with an armistice. Under its terms, both parties began the fulfilment of the conditions of the demarcation of the line of separation of the armies, the demobilisation of troops to a minimum number in both armies (only 5,000 effectives) and the establishment of a peace conference for the determination of borders by one of two ways – either a direct agreement between parties or the ruling of an international arbitration with no set date of completion.



Paraguayan Army Lieutenant Colonel José María Casal, the hero of Ingavi. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



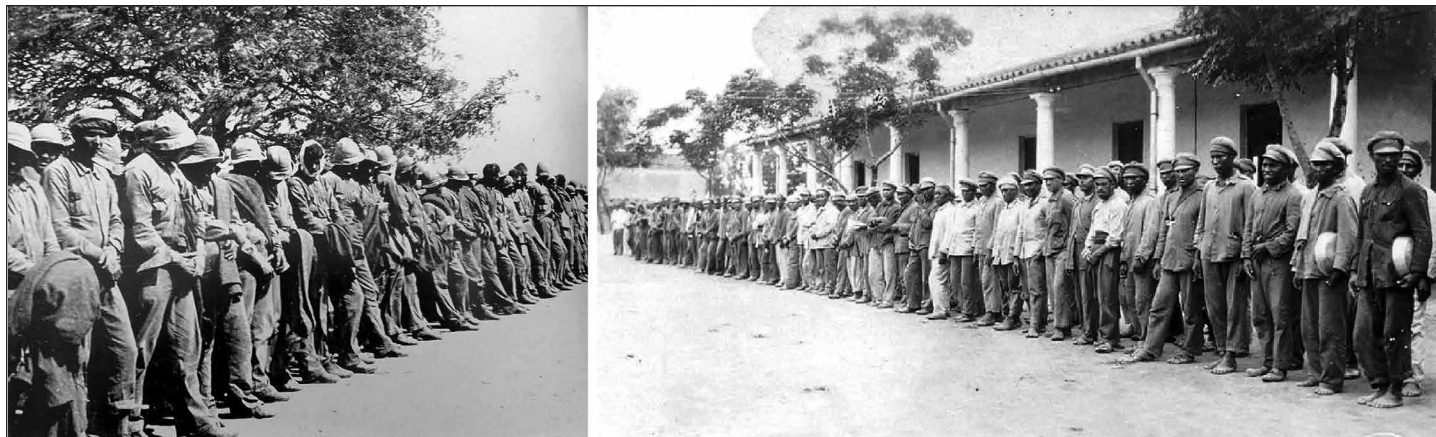
A fully armed Paraguayan company at Fort Ingavi in 1935. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



The President of Paraguay, Dr Eusebio Ayala, decorating Infantry Captain Antonio E. González with the Chaco Cross. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)



Left, a Paraguayan Army trench and machinegun nest at Fort Ingavi. Right, Fort Ingavi. (2nd Lieutenant Adolf Friedrich collection, Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)



Left, Paraguayan POWs. Right, Bolivian POWs. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)



Top, Bolivian and Paraguayan Army officers fraternising immediately after the ceasefire. Bottom, Bolivian Army Major German Busch (centre) with Paraguayan Army Lieutenant Colonel Juan Barrios (third from the left) and 1st Lieutenant Claudio Luis Gutierrez (third from the right) with some other Bolivian officers fraternising at Villamontes after the ceasefire. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)



A huge victory parade took place in Asunción on 22 August 1935. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

The last shot of the war sounded seconds before noon on 14 June 1935, when the armistice came into force. Although there was an express prohibition on both sides against fraternising with the enemy, a few minutes after midday, troops in many sectors of the Paraguayan and Bolivian lines were intertwined in long hugs, with shouts of joy and exchanges of gifts. It had been a strange sort of war, one in which the protagonists did not hate each other from the beginning to the end.

The repatriation of prisoners

After arduous negotiations, the repatriation of prisoners ended in August 1936. Of the 24,000 Bolivian prisoners, some 17,000 returned to Bolivia and about 3,500 stayed in Paraguay; the others escaped or died in captivity. Of the 2,800 Paraguayan prisoners, all returned to Paraguay, except about 40 who settled in Bolivia.

The Borders

The peace conference at which Brazil, Argentina, Peru, the USA, Uruguay and Chile mediated came to an end in July 1938 when

the Peace, Boundaries and Friendship Treaty between Bolivia and Paraguay was signed, which set definitive borders between the countries. Of the 320,000km² of the disputed Chaco Boreal, Paraguay obtained 246,000km² including the portion that was already in its possession before the war, and Bolivia kept the rest. The final area conquered by the Paraguayan Army during the war was about 143,450km², but through diplomatic negotiation it ceded some 17,225km² and in compensation obtained about 10,000km² that had not been conquered by arms.

The intelligent solution that the diplomats gave to the establishment of the borders by means of a pretended arbitration by third-party countries (Bolivians and Paraguayans had already agreed in advance on the limits) ensured neither nation protested against the results of the final negotiation. When the pretence of the arbitration was eventually discovered, it was too late to react; thirty years had passed since the end of the war and people did not want to hear anything more about it.

CONCLUSION

The Chaco War was a unique conflict. Its beginning was attributed to the awkwardness of a Bolivian officer, who misinterpreted the orders he received, and the political short-sightedness of a president (Salamanca) who chose to vindicate the honour of his country, leading to a war that cost 40,000 Bolivian lives.

The war's development was diametrically opposed to what was expected. It had been believed that Bolivia – with a greater economic potential – would devastate the smaller Paraguay – with its quasi-primitive economy, but in the end it was the other way around. Discounting the great defensive victory of Villamontes, Bolivia did not gain any other decisive military successes.

For its part, Paraguay harvested several triumphs that were key to the development of the war. Boquerón showed that what the newspapers said was a fallacy; Campo Vía meant that the Paraguayan Army was prepared for large-scale manoeuvres, with stunning results; and the Battle of El Carmen proved that the Battle of Campo Vía had not been the result of luck. Yrendagué-Picuiba ended up demonstrating the ability and training that the Paraguayan soldier had acquired throughout the war. These great successes had an

unexpected ingredient; the Paraguayan Army fought the war with 80 percent of their weapons being of Bolivian origin.

Where the differences reached grotesque levels was in the conduct of the war. General José Félix Estigarribia, commander of the Paraguayan forces, who had studied the General Staff in the Superior School of War of Paris, greatly outperformed the four commanders of the Bolivian Army (Osorio, Lanza, Kundt and Peñaranda), none of whom had studied military matters to any high degree.

In the end, the disproportion in the number of effectives was not enough for Bolivia to recover its lost territory; its final counteroffensive, in which so many hopes had been placed, caused a Paraguayan retreat of no more than 50km, and then only in the central sector. In view of that meagre result, the end of the war was obviously nigh.

While the war was ended by an armistice that finally brought peace, the Chaco campaign has been celebrated in Paraguay as a war won. The experience of having expelled an invading army after the most successful military actions that are remembered throughout South America grants the Paraguayans a feeling that will never change in time, the same feeling that David felt when he defeated Goliath.



Paraguayan Army commanders: Top row, from left to right; Brigadier General José Félix Estigarribia, Colonel Juan Manuel Garay, Lieutenant Colonel Amancio Pampliega, Lieutenant Colonel Raimundo Rolon, Colonel Nicolas Delgado and Lieutenant Colonel Gaudioso Nuñez. Bottom row, from left to right; Colonel Carlos José Fernandez, Colonel Juan Bautista Ayala, Colonel Rafael Franco, Colonel Luis Irrazabal, Colonel Francisco Brizuela and Major Paulino Antola. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

Appendix I

PARAGUAYAN COMMANDERS

Commander-in-Chief	Brigadier General José Félix Estigarribia
COMANCHACO Chief of Staff	Colonel Juan Manuel Garay
	Lieutenant Colonel Amancio Pampliega
COMANCHACO Operations Chief	Lieutenant Colonel Raimundo Rolón
I Army Corps (ICE)	Colonel Nicolas Delgado (Dec 32 to Apr 33)
	Lieutenant Colonel Gaudioso Nuñez (May 33 to June 34)
	Colonel Carlos José Fernández (June 34 to June 35)
II Army Corps (IICE)	Colonel Juan Bautista Ayala (Dec 32 to Dec 33)
	Colonel Rafael Franco (Dec 33 to June 35)
III Army Corps (IIICE)	Colonel Luis Irrazabal (March 33 to Dec 33)
	Colonel Francisco Brizuela (Dec 33 to June 34)
	Colonel Nicolas Delgado (June 34 to June 35)
1st Infantry Division	Lieutenant Colonel José Félix Estigarribia
	Lieutenant Colonel Carlos José Fernández
	Lieutenant Colonel Rafael Franco
	Major Juan N. Barrios
	Major Julio B. Jara

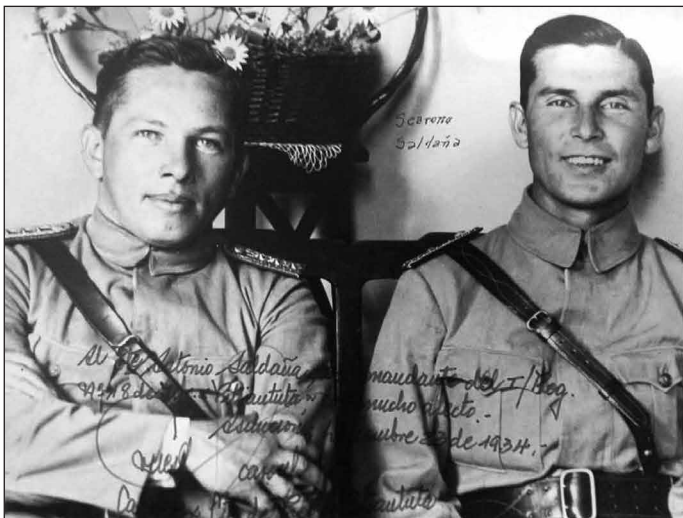
2nd Infantry Division	Lieutenant Colonel Gaudioso Nuñez
	Maj.orPaulino Antola
	Major Eduardo Torreani Viera
	Lieutenant Colonel José Rosa Vera
	Lieutenant Colonel Arístides Rivas Ortellado
	Lieutenant Colonel Luis Gilberto Andrada
	Lieutenant Colonel José Clemente Britos
	Major Basiliano Caballero Irala
3rd Infantry Division	Colonel Julian Sanchez
	Lieutenant Colonel Nicolas Delgado
	Lieutenant Colonel Francisco Brizuela
	Navy Captain Elias Ayala
	Colonel Camilo Recalde
4th Infantry Division	Lieutenant Colonel Nicolas Delgado
	Lieutenant Colonel Arturo Bray
	Lieutenant Colonel Luis Santiviago
	Lieutenant Colonel Carlos J. Fernández
	Lieutenant Colonel Eduardo Torreani Viera
5th Infantry Division	Colonel Luis Irrazabal



Officers of the Paraguayan 5th Infantry Regiment 'Gral. Diaz' (left) and 8th Infantry Regiment 'Piribebuy' (right). (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)

	Colonel Francisco Brizuela
	Lieutenant Colonel Abdón Palacios
6th Infantry Division	Colonel Alfredo Mena
	Major Vicente Machuca
	Major Federico W. Smith
	Lieutenant Colonel Paulino Antola
	Major Feliciano Morales
	Major Atilio J. Benítez
7th Infantry Division	Colonel José Antonio Ortiz
	Lieutenant Colonel Eugenio Alejandrino Garay
	Lieutenant Colonel José María Cazal
	Major Enrique Godoy Cáceres
	Lieutenant Colonel Feliciano Morales

8th Infantry Division	Major José Rosa Vera
	Lieutenant Colonel José Félix Cabrera
	Lieutenant Colonel Eugenio Alejandrino Garay
	Major Lorenzo Medina
	Major Dámaso Sosa Valdez
9th Infantry Division	Lieutenant Colonel Eduardo Torreani Viera
	Lieutenant Colonel Vicente Machuca
	Lieutenant Colonel Camilo Recalde
	Major Basiliano Caballero Irala
	Lieutenant Colonel Luis Santiviago
1st Cavalry Division	Lieutenant Colonel Manuel García de Zúñiga
2nd Cavalry Division	Major Tranquilino Ortiz Cabral
	Lieutenant Colonel Alfredo Ramos



From left to right, Captain Ernesto Scarone, Commander of the 2nd Infantry Regiment 'Ytororó', with his friend Lieutenant Antonio Saldaña of the 18th Infantry Regiment 'Pitiantuta', Captain Vicente P. Smith, commander of the 18th Infantry Regiment, and Lieutenant Sinforiano Rojas, Convoy Chief of the Paraguayan Army. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)



A Paraguayan cavalry patrol near Fort Vanguardia. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden).

Sappers Regiment RZ.1 ‘General Aquino’	Captain Basiliano Caballero Irala
	Captain Francisco Chávez del Valle
	Captain Felipe Nery Vellila Avalos
Sappers Regiment RZ.2 ‘General Genes’	Captain Basiliano Caballero Irala
	Captain Virgilio Larrosa
	Captain Juan Martincich
	Captain Federico Jara Troche
	1st Lieutenant Luis Volta Gaona
Sappers Regiment RZ.3 ‘Teniente Pereira’	Captain Carlos Castaño Decoud
	Major Francisco Vera y Aragón
	Captain Cirilo Antonio Rivarola
Sappers Regiment RZ.4 ‘Aquidabán’	Major Hipólito Radice
	Captain Hermes Saguier
	Captain Carlos Castaño Decoud
	Captain Carlos Domanisky
Army Logistics Corps	Major Sampson Harrison
Army Health Corps	Colonel Víctor Idoyaga, MD
	Colonel Carlos Díaz León, MD
Navy	Captain Manuel T. Aponte
	Captain Rufino Martínez
Navy Arsenal	Commander José A. Bozzano
Naval Aviation	1st Lieutenant PAN Ramon E. Martino
Military Aviation School Director	Major HC Vicente Almandos Almonacid



A Paraguayan 105mm Schneider gun, with 1st Lieutenant Bohanovich (left) and 2nd Lieutenant Stroessner (right). Stroessner became the President of Paraguay between 1954 and 1989. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden)

	Commander Jose A. Bozzano
Air Arm Battlefield Commander	Major PAM Jose Atilio Migone
	Captain PAM Leandro Aponte

Appendix II

PARAGUAYAN ARMY UNITS

Infantry Regiments	Established
1st ‘Dos de Mayo’	1924
2nd ‘Ytororó’	1924
3rd ‘Corrales’	1924, activated in 1927
4th ‘Curupayty’	1924, activated in 1929
5th ‘General Díaz’	1928
6th ‘Boquerón’	1929, activated in 1932
7th ‘Veinticuatro de Mayo’	1929, activated in 1932
8th ‘Piribebuy’	1929, activated in 1932
9th ‘Itá Ybaté’	1929, activated in 1932
10th ‘Sauce’	1929, activated in 1932
11th ‘Abay’	1932 as battalion, became regiment in 1933
12th ‘Rubio Ñu’	1933
13th ‘Tuyuti’	1933
14th ‘Cerro Corá’	1933
15th ‘Lomas Valentinas’	1933
16th ‘Mariscal López’	1933



A typical road built by Paraguayan Army sappers. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden)

17th ‘Yataity Corá’	1933
18th ‘Pitiantuta’	1933
19th ‘General Escobar’	1933
20th	Never established
21st ‘Humaitá’	1933
22nd to 25th	Authorised but never established
26th ‘Cerro León’	1933
Regiment ‘Batallón Cuarenta’	1933
<i>Batallón de Rifleros 1</i> (1st Rifle Battalion)	Temporary unit, second half of 1933
<i>Batallón de Rifleros 2</i> (2nd Rifle Battalion)	Temporary unit, second half of 1933

Cavalry Regiments	Established
1st ‘Valois Rivarola’	1926
2nd ‘Coronel Toledo’	1930, activated in 1931
3rd ‘Coronel Mongelós’	1932
4th ‘Acá Carayá’	1932 (reserve status in 1935)
5th ‘Acá Verá’	1932
6th ‘General Caballero’	1933
7th ‘General San Martín’	1933, with Argentine volunteers
8th ‘General Duarte’	1933
9th ‘Capitán Bado’	1933
10th ‘Coronel Oviedo’	1933

Artillery Groups	Established
1st ‘General Bruguez’	1926
2nd ‘General Roa’	1931
3rd ‘Coronel Hermosa’	1932
4th ‘Mayor Albertano Zayas’	1933
5th ‘Capitán Gill’	1933



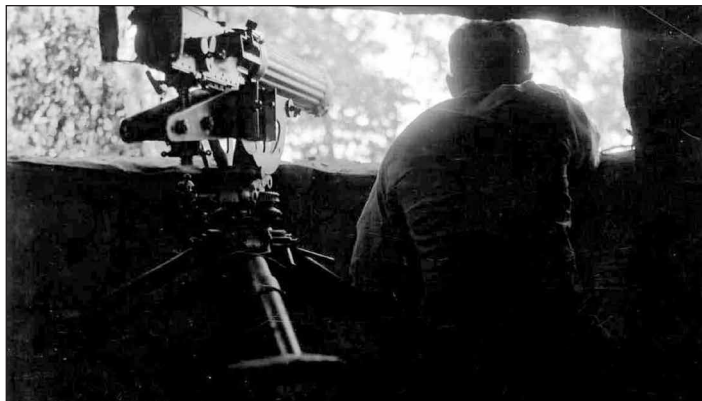
Paraguayan troops of the 3rd Infantry Regiment ‘Corrales’ during an assault on the Bolivian positions at El Carmen on 16 November 1934. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

Engineer Regiments (Sappers)	Established
1st ‘General Aquino’	As a battalion in 1930 and regiment in 1934
2nd ‘General Genes’	1934
3rd ‘Teniente Pereira’	1934
4th ‘Aquidabán’	1934

Appendix III

PARAGUAYAN ARMY CORPS COMPONENTS IN 1932

I ARMY CORPS	
1st Artillery Group ‘General Bruguez’	Direct Command
1st Sappers Regiment ‘General Aquino’	Direct Command
2nd Infantry Division	1st Infantry Regiment ‘Dos de Mayo’
	3rd Infantry Regiment ‘Corrales’
	10th Infantry Regiment ‘Sauce’
7th Infantry Division	9th Infantry Regiment ‘Itá Ybaté’
	12th Infantry Regiment ‘Rubio Ñu’
	17th Infantry Regiment ‘Yataity Corá’
8th Infantry Division	16th Infantry Regiment ‘Mariscal López’
	18th Infantry Regiment ‘Pitiantuta’
	40th Battalion
	9th Cavalry Regiment ‘Capitán Bado’
II ARMY CORPS	
3rd Artillery Group ‘Coronel Hermosa’	Direct Command



A Paraguayan Army heavy machinegun nest with a captured Vickers.
(Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Víctor Meden)

4th Sappers Regiment 'Aquidabán'	Direct Command
1st Infantry Division	2nd Infantry Regiment 'Ytororó'
	4th Infantry Regiment 'Curupayty'
	19th Infantry Regiment 'General Escobar'
	2nd Cavalry Regiment 'Coronel Toledo'
6th Infantry Division	5th Infantry Regiment 'General Díaz'
	8th Infantry Regiment 'Piribebuy'
	14th Infantry Regiment 'Cerro Corá'
1st Cavalry Division	1st Cavalry Regiment 'Valois Rivarola'
	7th Cavalry Regiment 'San Martín'
III ARMY CORPS	
2nd Artillery Group 'General Roa'	Direct Command
3rd Sappers Regiment 'Teniente Pereira'	Direct Command
4th Infantry Division	6th Infantry Regiment 'Boquerón'
	20th Infantry Regiment 'Acá Yuasá'
	3rd Cavalry Regiment 'Coronel Mongelós'



A Paraguayan Army 81mm Stokes Brandt mortar.
(Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

3rd Infantry Division	21st Infantry Regiment 'Humaitá'
	26th Infantry Regiment 'Cerro León'
	8th Cavalry Regiment 'General Duarte'
5th Infantry Division	7th Infantry Regiment '24 de Mayo'
	13th Infantry Regiment 'Tuyutí'
	6th Cavalry Regiment 'General Caballero'
2nd Cavalry Division	4th Cavalry Regiment 'Acá Carayá'
	5th Cavalry Regiment 'Acá Verá'
	10th Cavalry Regiment 'Coronel Oviedo'

Appendix IV

EQUIPMENT OF THE PARAGUAYAN ARMY

Small Arms	Remarks
Mauser Chilean Model 1895 7mm	15,000 examples
Mauser German Model 1907 7.65mm	2,500 examples
Mauser German Model 1933 7.65mm	9,000 examples
Mauser Belgian Model FN 24 7.65mm	7,000 examples
Mauser Spanish Model 1927 7.65mm	11,800 examples
Lee-Metford 7.7mm	
Thompson submachinegun 0.45-in	
Vollmer VMP 1930	25 examples
FN Browning Belgian Model 1903 pistol	19x21mm
Smith & Wesson revolver	.38 calibre
Carumbe-í hand grenade	Manufactured by the Navy Arsenal

Automatic Weapons	Remarks
Madsen light machinegun Argentine Model 1926	7.65mm with bipod & tripod mount (776 examples)
Madsen heavy machinegun Model 1926/1929	7.65mm
Vickers-Maxim heavy machinegun Model 1891	7.7mm
Colt-Browning heavy machinegun Model 1928	7.65mm (132 examples)

Mortars	Remarks
Stokes-Brandt 81mm	24 examples



A Paraguayan Army 75mm Schneider mountain gun.
(Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)



A Paraguayan Army Ford truck transporting Bolivian POWs near Camacho. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN via Victor Meden)

Arsenal Naval 81mm	12 examples; manufactured by the Navy Arsenal
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Anti-aircraft Guns	Remarks
Colt-Browning heavy machinegun	12.7mm
Vickers-Maxim heavy machinegun	7.7mm
Colt-Browning heavy machinegun	7.65mm

Artillery	Remarks
Krupp M1907 75mm mountain gun	7 examples
Armstrong M1902 3-in mountain gun	6 examples
Schneider M1927 75mm mountain gun	24 examples
Schneider M1927 105mm mountain howitzer	8 examples
Vickers 3-in naval gun	5 examples
Vickers 7.5-in naval gun	1 example
Armstrong 3-in landing gun	2 examples



Paraguayan (top) and Bolivian (bottom) troops resting in a clearing in the bush. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN and Bolivian Army Archives)

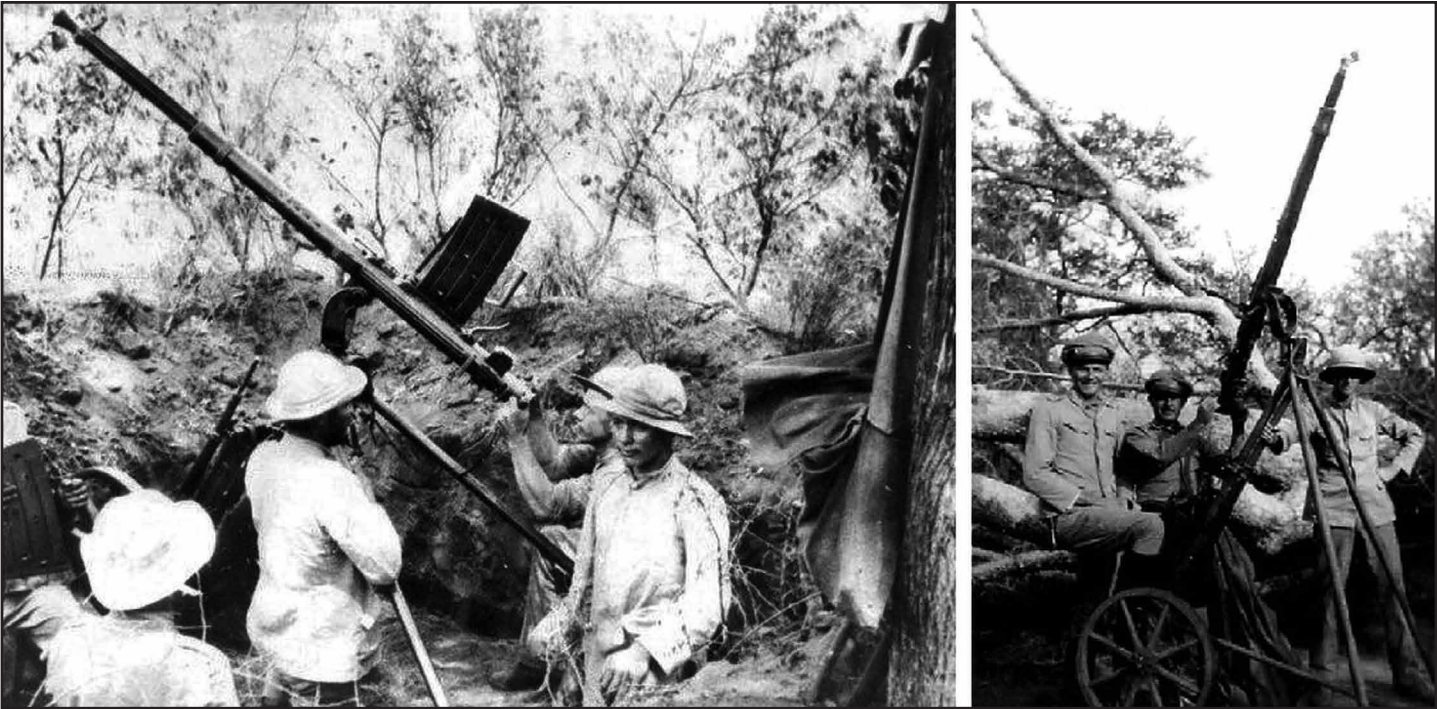
Trucks	Remarks
Ford Model BB 1.5 ton	992 units
Chevrolet 1.5 ton Model 1931	853 units
International 1.5 ton Model 1930	207 units

Note: Eventually, privately owned trucks and even busses were requisitioned by the Paraguayan Army during the war.

Appendix V

WAR MATÉRIEL CAPTURED BY THE PARAGUAYAN ARMY

Rifles	22,385 of various types
Machineguns	1,856, heavy and light
Mortars	72 of various calibres
Flamethrowers	3
Tanks	1 Vickers Mk.A 6-ton. 1 Vickers Mk.B 6-ton.
Artillery	3 Krupp M1898 75mm mountain guns 5 Schneider MPC 2 75mm mountain howitzers 4 Vickers Mk.C 105mm mountain howitzers 7 Vickers Mk.KK 75mm mountain howitzers



Semag-Becker 20mm AA guns captured by the Paraguayan Army in Boquerón and El Carmen. (Instituto de Historia y Museo Militar del MDN)

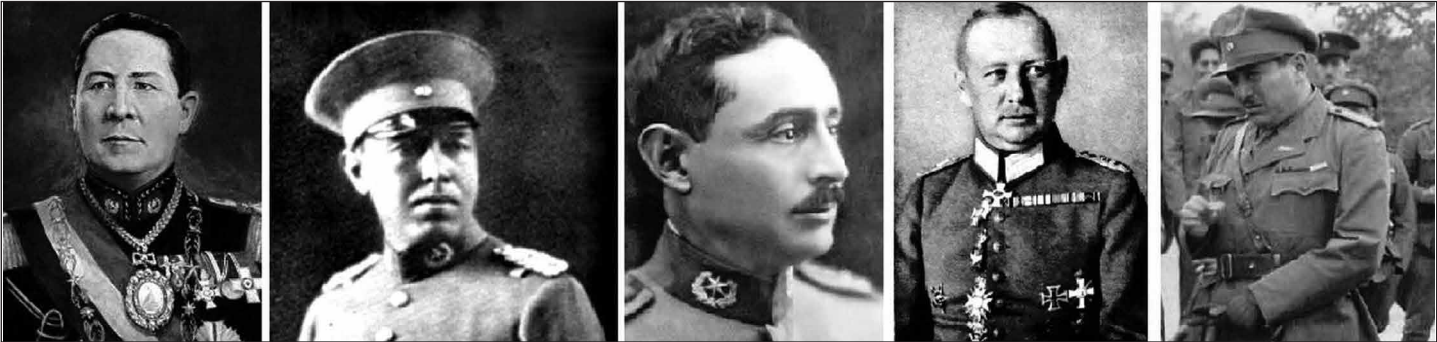
	2 Vickers Mk.B 105mm field guns
	8 Vickers Mk.E 65mm infantry guns
Anti-tank/Anti-aircraft guns	7 Semag-Becker 20mm guns
Trucks	165 of various types in usable conditions

	Lieutenant Colonel Oscar Moscoso
	General Filiberto Osorio
I Army Corps	General Enrique Peñaranda
	Colonel David Toro Ruilova
	Colonel Enrique Frias Yanguas
II Army Corps	Colonel Bernardino Bilbao Rioja
	General Carlos Quintanilla
	General Filiberto Osorio
III Army Corps	General N. Gonzalez Flor
Central Sector	General Arturo Guillen
Stage Service (Logistics)	Colonel Julio Sanjines
1st Infantry Division	Lieutenant Colonel Julio Quiroga
2nd Infantry Division	Colonel Angel Rodriguez
3rd Infantry Division	Colonel Salustio Zelaya
	Lieutenant Colonel Angel Ayoroa
	Colonel Felipe Arrieta

Appendix VI

BOLIVIAN COMMANDERS

Commander-in-Chief	General Carlos Quintanilla Quiroga (June to Sept. 32)
	General Filiberto Osorio (Sept. to Oct. 32)
	General José L. Lanza (Oct. to Dec. 32)
	General Hans Kundt (Dec. 32 to Dec. 33)
	General Enrique Peñaranda (Dec. 33 to June 35)
Chief of Staff	General José L. Lanza



Bolivian Army commanders: from left to right, General Carlos Quintanilla Quiroga, General Filiberto Osorio, General Jose Lanza, General Hans Kundt and General Enrique Peñaranda. (Bolivian Army Archives)

4th Infantry Division	Colonel Emilio Gonzalez Quint
	Colonel Francisco Peña
5th Infantry Division	Colonel Vargas Pozo
	Lieutenant Colonel Luis Gamarra S.
	Colonel Guillen
	Lieutenant Colonel Jacinto Reque Teran
6th Infantry Division	Lieutenant Colonel Angel Ayoroa
7th Infantry Division	Colonel Gerardo Rodriguez
8th Infantry Division	Lieutenant Colonel Angel Ayoroa
	Colonel Cesar Menacho
	Colonel Demetrio Ramos
9th Infantry Division	Colonel Carlos Banzer
1st Cavalry Division	Colonel Enrique Alcoreza
2nd Cavalry Division	Lieutenant Colonel Secundino Olmos
Bolivian Air Forces	Colonel Bernardino Bilbao Rioja
	Lieutenant Colonel Jorge Jordan Mercado

Appendix VII

BOLIVIAN ARMY UNITS

Infantry Regiments	Remarks
1st 'Colorados'	Originally 'Murillo' at La Paz, later renamed 'Jordán' at Sta. Cruz
2nd 'Sucre'	
3rd 'Perez'	
4th 'Loa'	Potosí to Villamontes 1928, Charagua 1931, Platanillos/ Muñoz 1932
5th 'Campero'	Moved from Copacabana to Villamontes 1931
6th 'Campos'	Fortin Esteros 1927, Arce 1930
7th 'Azurduy'	La Paz 1932
8th 'Ayacucho'	Tarija to Villamontes 1930, Guachalla



Bolivian Army NCO School in La Paz in 1933. (Bolivian Army Archives)

9th 'Warnes'	Santa Cruz/Puerto Suarez 1932; later renamed 'Santa Cruz de la Sierra'
10th 'Riosinho'	Riberalta 1932
11th 'Bage'	Cobija 1932
12th 'Florida'	Puerto Suarez to Roboré 1931; later renamed 'Manchego'
13th 'Quijarro'	Puerto Suarez 1932
14th 'Florida'	Established July 1932
15th	Established July 1932
16th 'Carabineros de la Paz'	Established 1932 from La Paz Police; later renamed 'Castillo'
17th	Established July 1932
18th 'Junin'	Established July 1932, later renamed 'Montes'
19th 'Tarija'	Established July 1932
20th 'Cochabamba'	Established August 1932
21st	Established August 1932
22nd 'Iruya'	Established August 1932
23rd 'Chuquisaca'	Established August 1932
24th 'Vanguardia'	Established September 1932
25th	Established September 1932
26th	Established September 1932
27th 'Chacaltaya'	Established October 1932
28th	Established October 1932
29th	Established October 1932
30th 'Pari'	Established October 1932
31st 'Rocha'	Established October 1932
32nd	Established October 1932
33rd 'Chorolque'	Established October 1932
34th 'Illimani'	Established October 1932
35th 'Padilla'	Established October 1932
36th	Established November 1932
37th	Established November 1932
38th 'Socobaya'	Established November 1932
39th	Established November 1932



Bolivian Army officers. (Diario La Razón)



Bolivian soldiers with a Semag-Becker AA gun at Fort Arce in 1932. (Bolivian Army Archives)



Bolivian Army sappers of Regiment 'Linares', working on the Esperanza trail. (Bolivian Army Archives)

40th 'La Paz'	Established November 1932; later renamed 'General Gomez'
41st 'Colorados de Bolivia'	Established November 1932
42nd	Established November 1932
43rd	Established November 1932
44th	Established November 1932
45th	Established December 1932
46th	Established December 1932
47th 'Parapiti'	Established December 1932
48th	Established December 1932
49th	Established December 1932
50th 'Murgia'	Established December 1932

Cavalry Regiments	Remarks
1st 'Avaroa'	Oruro, June 1932
2nd 'Ballivián'	Guaqui, June 1932
3rd 'Aroma'	Coraguará de Carangas, June 1932. Absorbed by 7th 'Chichas' October 1933; later reformed as 3rd 'Chuquisaca'
4th 'Ingavi'	Roboré/Lagunitas, June 1932
5th 'Lanza'	Muñoz, June 1932
6th 'Castrillo'	Established July 1932
7th 'Chichas'	Established July 1932
8th 'Aroma'	Amalgamation of 3rd 'Aroma' and 7th 'Chichas' in October 1933

9th	
10th 'Cazadores de Yacuma'	
11th	
12th	
13th	
14th	
15th	
16th	
17th	
18th	
19th	
20th 'Cochabamba'	

Artillery Regiments and Groups	Remarks
1st 'Camacho'	Artillery Regiment. Oruro, June 1932
2nd 'Bolivar'	Artillery Regiment. Guaqui, June 1932
3rd 'Pisagua'	Artillery Regiment. Ex-'Regimiento de Obuses', Sept. 32
6th Artillery Group	Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group, established La Paz, Sept. 32
7th Artillery Group	
8th Artillery Group	
9th Artillery Group	
10th Artillery Group	
11th Artillery Group	
12th Artillery Group	
13th Artillery Group	
14th Artillery Group	
15th Artillery Group	
Independent Batteries	10 Field Batteries and 2 Anti-Aircraft Batteries.

Engineer Regiments (Sappers)	Remarks
1st 'Pando'	ex'Regimiento Técnico'. Villamontes, June 1932
2nd 'Padilla'	Todos los Santos, Beni, June 1932. Renamed 'Acre'
3rd 'Paucarpata'	Platanillos, 1931
4th 'Santa Cruz'	Roboré, June 1932
5th 'Pilcomayo'	
6th	
7th	

Appendix VIII

REGIMENTS OF THE BOLIVIAN DIVISIONS IN 1932

1st Division (Oruro)	4th Division (Muñoz)
2nd Infantry Regiment 'Sucre'	4th Infantry Regiment 'Loa'
3rd Infantry Regiment 'Perez'	6th Infantry Regiment 'Campos'
5th Infantry Regiment 'Campero'	8th Infantry Regiment 'Ayacucho'
2nd Cavalry Regiment 'Ballivian'	5th Cavalry Regiment 'Lanza'
3rd Cavalry Regiment 'Aroma'	Artillery Independent Battery
1st Artillery Regiment 'Camacho'	
3rd Artillery Regiment 'Pisagua'	
2nd Division (La Paz)	5th Division (Puerto Suarez)
7th Infantry Regiment 'Azurduy'	9th Infantry Regiment 'Warnes'
1st Cavalry Regiment 'Abaroa'	13th Infantry Regiment 'Quijarro'
2nd Artillery Regiment 'Bolivar'	Artillery Independent Battery
1st Communication Regiment 'Pando'	
3rd Division (Roboré)	6th Division (Riberalta)
1st Infantry Regiment 'Colorados'	10th Infantry Regiment 'Riosinho'
12th Infantry Regiment 'Florida'	11th Infantry Regiment 'Bagué'
4th Cavalry Regiment 'Ingavi'	1st Sappers Regiment 'Padilla'
3rd Engineering Regiment 'Paucarpata'	
Artillery Independent Battery	

Appendix IX

EQUIPMENT OF THE BOLIVIAN ARMY

Small Arms	Mauser Argentine Model 1891 7.65mm
	Mauser Bolivian Model 1908 7.65mm
	Mauser Belgian Model 7.65mm
	Mauser Czech Model vz. 24 7.65mm



Left, Two Bolivian Army infantry soldiers with full gear. Right, a Bolivian Vickers heavy machinegun used for AA fire. (Bolivian Army Archives)

	Bergmann MP-28 Model 1934 submachinegun 9mm, 700 examples
	Schmeisser Model 1928/II submachinegun 9mm
	Vollmer submachinegun 9mm
	Steyr-Solothurn S1-100 submachinegun 9mm, 1,200 examples
	Thompson submachinegun
	Parabellum pistol 9mm
	ZK-383 submachinegun, 500 examples
	Colt .38 revolver
	Luger P08 pistol
	Mauser pocket M1910 pistol
	Mauser C96 German M1896 pistol
Automatic Weapons	Madsen Model 1934 light machinegun 7.65mm, 100 examples



Left, Bolivian troops firing an 81mm mortar from their trench position. Right, Bolivian Army Vickers Mk. C 105mm mountain howitzers, Rivera Battery, Rios Group, Caiguá, 1935. (Bolivian Army Archives)



Bolivian Army Dodge trucks at Tiguipa (top left), International Harvester C-1 (top right), Chevrolet ambulances (bottom left) and a convoy of Chevrolet trucks with troops (bottom right). Ford and Willys Whippet trucks were also used. (Bolivian Army Archives)

	Vickers-Berthier light machinegun 7.65mm, 500 examples
	Brno ZB-30 light machinegun 7.65mm
	Vickers Mk.I Class C heavy machinegun 7.65mm, 250 examples
	Maxim heavy machinegun 7.65mm
	Colt-Browning MG-38 heavy machinegun 12.7mm, 50 examples
	ZB 54 heavy machinegun 12.7mm
Mortars	AAC 47mm
	Stokes-Brandt 81mm
	AAC 105 mm
Tanks & Tankettes	2 Carden-Lloyd VIb tankettes
	1 Vickers 6-ton Type A tank
	2 Vickers 6-ton Type B tanks
Artillery	16 Krupp M1898 75mm mountain guns
	8 Krupp M1874 75mm mountain guns
	20 Schneider MPC-2 75mm mountain howitzers
	8 Schneider LD 75mm field howitzers
	47 Vickers Mk. KK 75mm mountain howitzers
	18 Vickers Mk. MM 75mm field guns

	12 Vickers Mk. C 105mm mountain howitzers
	8 Vickers Mk. B 105mm field guns
	30 Vickers Mk. E 65mm infantry guns
Anti-Tank/Anti-Aircraft Guns	12 Semag-Becker 20mm
Anti-Aircraft Guns	16 Oerlikon SSG32 Mk.I 20mm

Appendix X

WAR MATÉRIEL CAPTURED BY THE BOLIVIAN ARMY

Rifles	4,000 of various types
Machineguns	20 heavy and 100 light
Mortars	4 Stokes-Brandt 81mm
Artillery	3 Schneider M1927 75mm mountain howitzers
	4 Vickers M1897 75mm mountain guns
Trucks	80 of various types

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